THE CASTE SYSTEM.

BY

GANGA PRASAD, M. A., M. R. A. S.,

Principal and Governor, Gurukula, Brendaban;
Lately of the Provincial Civil Service, U. P. of Agra and Oudh;
Late Professor of English and Logic, Meerut College.

PUBLISHED BY

THE ARYA PRADESHIK PRATINIDHI SABHA, LAHORE (PUNJAB)

1922

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THE CASTE SYSTEM

ITS ORIGIN AND GROWTH; ITS SOCIAL EVILS AND THEIR REMEDIES.

GANGA PRASAD, M. A., M. R. A. S.,
Principal and Governor, Gurukula, Brendaban;
Lately of the Provincial Civil Service, U. P. of Agra and Oudh;
Late Professor of English and Logic, Meerut College.

न विशेषोऽस्ते वर्णानां सर्वं ब्राह्ममिदं जगत्।
ब्राह्मणा पूर्वसृष्टं हि कर्मणा वर्णतां गतम्॥

महाभारत, शान्तिपर्व॥

"There is no distinction of castes: the whole of this world is created by God. Having been created by God, it became afterwards divided into *varnas* or classes in consequence of [men's different] actions."

Mahabharata.—Shanti Parva, Chap. 188, 10.

THIRD EDITION
REVISED AND ENLARGED.

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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

The Book in its present form is only a reproduction of the last edition. The deplorable religious state of the country with regard to matters concerning caste and the so-called untouchables, has necessitated its reprint in English with its rendering into Malayalam. The last year's heart-rending atrocities, committed by the Moplah upon the caste-ridden Hindus of the Malabar, has made its reprint all the more indispensable. It is with this object *viz.*, dissemination of the free spirit of caste ***based upon the division of labour and merit and not birth*** that the Arya Pradeshik Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab, with Mahatma Hans Raj, B. A., as its president, has got it neatly printed and published. It is priced moderately so that it may reach every Hindu.

I need not say anything more in condemnation of the system of caste as it exists now. But it has to be mentioned that from our personal experience of caste rigours existing in Malabar, we have no doubt in saying that Malabar can be treated as the head-quarters of the rotten system of caste in the whole of India. Swami Vivekanand was quite right when he considered Malabar as a *Lunatic Asylum*. In general terms, he used to remark that the fate of India was sealed down to death the very day when the word 'untouchable' was invented. Let us not waste any more of our time in offering destructive remarks on the present miserable state of Hindus and want of unity amongst them on account of these water-tight compartments on a wrong basis. We have enough of constructive work to do still.

We can only conclude this with an appeal particularly to young men and women, 'Ye! Oh young men and women of India! It is high time for you to wake up and give an everlasting blow to this existing evil. Have the moral courage to

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stand upright and declare broad-cast that you do not believe in the separation between man and man in the name of caste. Have the patience to go through the pamphlets of the Arya Samaj, which is doing its level best in reviving and diffusing the teachings of the Vedas—the oldest books in the library of the world. The revival of this movement *viz.*, back to the Vedas was started by the *Great Rishi Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the Luther of India*, amidst hoards of unbelief and superstition. It is for you now to carry to its completion the sacred mission which he has entrusted to you all.

MEHTA SAWAN MALL DUTTA,
(Upadeshak.)
GIAN CHAND, M.A.,
Prof. of History, D. A. V. College,
Jallundar, Punjab,
Arya Samaj Relief Volunteers.

ARYA SAMAJ,
CALICUT, 22-7-'22

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

This pamphlet lays no claim to originality. I have freely drawn upon various books treating of the subject. In Chapter I, I am indebted for many Sanskrit extracts to " Muir's Sanskrit Texts." In Chapters II and III my obligations to Mr. R. C. Dutt are acknowledged on almost every page. My thanks are also due to my friend Babu Braj Nath, B. A., for the trouble taken by him in preparing the manuscript for the Press.

October, 1900. GANGA PRASADA.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Numerous typographical mistakes crept into the first edition of this book. There were also other defects in its get up which have now been removed. The book has been revised and some fresh matter added. The Chapter II on the *Origin And Growth Of Caste*, which comprised only 2 pages in the first edition, and covers 17 pages now, is practically a new addition. In writing it I have derived much help from Sir Herbert Risley's new and interesting book—" *The People of India* " and his *Census of India Report* for 1901.

22nd June, 1909. G. P.

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CASTE SYSTEM.

PRELIMINARY.

Caste System defined

BY CASTE SYSTEM we mean a system of hereditary castes such as prevails in modern India, a system by which a man's social position or his profession and the circle in which he can marry, are to be determined by his birth in a particular caste, irrespective of his character, qualifications or inclinations. It should be distinguished from वर्णव्यवस्था, the division of all men into four *classes* or "Varnas,"* which prevailed in ancient India and was originally based, as we shall subsequently show, on *merits* and not on *birth*.

Caste system unnatural.

The Vedas proclaim the unity of God who is the maker of the whole universe and the father of all men. From the common fatherhood of God follows the universal brotherhood of mankind. All men are equal in the eyes of God who makes no distinction between man and man except on the score of real merits. Any distinction therefore founded on mere birth must be unholy in His eyes and should be condemned as unnatural.

*The word *varna*, has been mistranslated into "caste." It is derived from *vri* 'to choose' and thus its proper meaning is a 'choice of profession or occupation.' It should, therefore, be translated into "class" rather than "caste."

The word '*caste*,' says Sir Henry Risley, "comes from the Portugese adventurers who followed Vasco De Gama to the west coast of India. The word itself is derived from the Latin *castus* and implies purity of breed" (*The People of India*, p. 66).

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CHAPTER I.

CASTE SYSTEM NOT ANCIENT.

That the Caste System did not exist in ancient India is now generally admitted by scholars.

§ 1.—Evidence from the Vedas.

The Vedas which are the oldest books do not sanction it. The Vedic division of people into four classes वर्ण, *viz.*, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras, was, as we have already remarked, something quite different. The *mantra* (Rig. X-90-11), in which it is described, has been misinterpreted in order to give countenance to the Caste System. It runs thus:—

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य*मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः ।
ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥

ऋग० १०।९०।११

Its orthodox version is: "The Brahmans sprang from the head of Brahma, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs, and the Shudras from his feet." But this interpretation involves several grave mistakes and the *mantra* should be literally translated thus:—

"Brahmans are the head of mankind (personified), Kshatriyas are made his arms, Vaishyas are what are

* For a fuller exposition of this text see the writer's 'Vedic Texts' No. 1, (Constitution of Human Society), published by the Arya Tract Society.

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his thighs, and Shudras are made his feet," That this alone is the correct meaning of the *mantra* is evident also from the context. In *mantra* 9 of this hymn mankind is spoken of as a person. *Mantra* 10 asks:—

मुखं किमस्यासीत् किं बाहू किमूरूपादा उच्येते ।

"What is his head, what are his arms and what are said to be his thighs and feet?" The *mantra* under consideration (No. 11) is a reply to this question and its only correct interpretation is what we have given above.

The *mantra* does not in any way countenance the caste system, but describes the constitution of human society by means of an analogy between mankind and the human body. The Brahmans, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras occupy the same places in society, as the head, the arms, the thighs and the feet respectively do in the human body. The *Brahmans* or those who possess learning and direct other men to discharge their duties, are properly called the Head or Brain of humanity. The *Kshatriyas* or those who possess strength and protect mankind are aptly termed the Arms of mankind. The *Vaishyas* or those who go from place to place for the purpose of trade and commerce are spoken of as the Thighs of human society. And the *Shudras* or those who are illiterate or otherwise unfit for the higher duties of life, are represented as the Feet of human society. This is not 'Caste System' but a division of mankind on the principle of '*Division* of Labour.' It is based not on *birth* but on *merits*. And what division can be better and more equitable than this? It assigns the first place to *learning and character*, the second place to strength or *power*, and the third to *wealth*. And is this not the order in which God has placed them in the human body? The head or brain which is the seat of knowledge is placed

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highest; then come the *arms* which are typical of strength or power; then the belly and *thighs* which are symbolical of wealth; and last of all the *feet* which administer to the whole body. Can any nation or religion boast of a better classification of mankind than this one according to which knowledge and learning, wisdom and piety are superior not only to wealth but also to power?

Thus, the *mantra* does not teach the the system of hereditary Castes but the principle of division of labour, without which no civilized society can exist. Nor is there any other *mantra* in the Vedas which gives the least countenance to this system. Indeed the whole spirit and tenor of the Vedic teaching is opposed to it; and it would not be difficult to point out texts which show in the clearest manner that the members of the same family might pursue different professions according to their tastes and capabilities. *Rig Veda* IX, 112, 3 (which is put into the mouth of a worshipper), says:—

कारुरहं ततोभि षगुपल प्रक्षिणी नना। नानाधियो वसूयवोऽनुगाइव तस्थि मेन्द्रायेन्दो परिस्रव ॥ १।११२।३

"I am a poet, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on stone. Being engaged in different occupations, we seek wealth and happiness, as cows seek food in different pastures. May Thy bounties flow for our happiness, O God."

We need not multiply quotations, as even European scholars now unanimously hold that the hereditary Castes did not exist in the Vedic times. We shall quote the opinions of only two celebrated Sanskritists:

Prefessor Max Muller says:—

"If then with all the documents before us, we ask the question, 'Does Caste, as we find it in Manu, and at the present day, form part of the most ancient religious

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We need not multiply quotations, as even European scholars now unanimously hold that the hereditary Castes did not exist in the Vedic times. We shall quote the opinions of only two celebrated Sanskritists:

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"If then with all the documents before us, we ask the question, 'Does Caste, as we find it in Manu, and at the present day, form part of the most ancient religious

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teaching of the Vedas'? We can answer with a decided No." (*Chips from a German Workshop* Vol. II, p. 807).

Weber thus remarks about the Vedic age :—

" There are no castes as yet ; the people are still one united whole, and bear but one name, that of *Visas*." (*Indian Literature*, p. 38.)

Mr. R. C. Dutt also says that in the entire range of the Vedas " we have not one single passage to show that the community was cut up into hereditary Castes."

§ 2.—EVIDENCE FROM THE UPANISHADS.

The Upanishads which are next only to the Vedas in antiquity and authority, not only do not sanction the caste system but are entirely opposed to it in spirit and tenor. The road to advancement was yet open to all persons according to their qualifications, and birth in an humble family did not stand in any one's way. The *Chandogya Upanishad* explains with beautiful simplicity how a certain *Satya Kama Jabala*, son of a slave girl, but filled with a noble love of truth and learning, approached the sage *Haridrumata Goutama* for studying Theology or *Brahma Vidya*. The Rishi enquired after his family. The boy said with charming frankness :—

नाहमेतद् वेद भो यद् गोत्रोऽहमस्म्य पृच्छंमातरम्सामा प्रत्यब्रवीद् बह्वहं चरन्ती परिचारिणी यौवनेत्वामलभे साहमेतन्न वेद यद् गोत्रस्त्वमसि जबालातुनामाऽहमस्मि सत्यकामा नाम त्वमसीतिसोऽहम्सत्यकामो जाबालोऽस्मि भो इति ॥

" I do not know, sir, of what *gotra* (family) I am. I asked my mother and she answered :—' In my youth when I had to move about, much as servant, I conceived thee. I do not know of what family thou art. I am *Jabala* by name, thou art Satyakama.' I am, therefore, *Satyakama Jabala*, sir."

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The Rishi was so struck with the frankness and truthfulness of the boy, that he allowed him to become one of his pupils. He was initiated into the mysteries of *Brahma Vidya*, and subsequently became a *Rishi* himself in spite of his low birth.

Indeed the distinction of Castes was so unknown that even great Rishis and learned Brahmans did not think it beneath their dignity to go to a Kshatriya in order to learn true knowledge. In *Chhandogya*, for example, *Uddalaki Aruni* and his son *Svetaketu* approach the Kshatriya King *Chitra Gangayani* for instruction. Another King *Pravahana Jaibali* explains the same Svetaketu the doctrine of Transmigration of Souls.

§ 3.—Evidence from the Mahabharata.

The Mahabharata contains many interpolations of a comparatively modern date. Yet it abounds with passages which clearly show that the ancient classification of people into four *Varnas* was not based on birth but on merits. In *Shanti Parva* Bhrigu says to Bharadwaja :—

न विशेषोऽस्ति वर्णानां सर्वं ब्राह्ममिदं जगत्।
ब्रह्मणा पूर्वसृष्टं हि कर्मणा वर्णतां गतम्॥
कामभोगप्रियास्तीक्ष्णाः क्रोधनाः प्रियसाहसाः।
त्यक्तस्वधर्मा रक्ताङ्गास्ते द्विजाः क्षत्रतां गताः॥
गोभ्यो वृत्तिं समास्थाय पीता कृष्योपजीविनः।
स्वधर्मान्नानुतिष्ठन्ति ते द्विजा वैश्यतां गताः॥
हिंसानृतप्रियालुब्धाः सर्वकर्मोपजीविनः।
कृष्णाशौचपरिभ्रष्टास्ते द्विजाः शूद्रतां गताः॥
इत्येते कर्मभिर्व्यस्ता द्विजा वर्णान्तरं गताः।
धर्मो यज्ञक्रिया तेषां नित्यं न प्रतिषिध्यते॥
इत्येते चतुरो वर्णा येषां ब्राह्मी सरस्वती।
विहिता ब्रह्मणा पूर्वं लोभात् त्वज्ञानतां गताः॥

"There is no distinction of castes: this whole world is created by God. Having been first created by God, it

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became afterwards separted into *Varnas* or classes in consequence of works. Those *twice-born* or regenerate men,—(a common name of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas), who were fond of pleasures, brave, excitable, daring, forgetful of piety and worship, and possessing the attributes of Passion (*rajas*) fell into the class of *Kshatriyas.* Those twice-born men who derived their livelihood from cows and agriculture and possessed both the attributes of Goodness (*satva*) and Passion (*rajas*), fell into the class of Vaishayas. Those twice-born men who were addicted to injuring other creatures and lying, who were covetous and who lived indiscriminately by all sorts of works, possessing the attribute of Darkness (*tamas*), who had fallen from purity, sank into the class of *Shudras.* Being thus separated by their works, the twice-born men became of different classes. Religion and the performance of *yajnas* (religious ceremonies) have never been forbidden to them. These are the four classes for whom God designed the *divine** *Vedas* in the beginning of the world, but who through cupidity fell into ignorance."

Bharadwaja again enquires :—

ब्राह्मणः केन भवति क्षत्रियो वा द्विजोत्तमः ।
वैश्यः शुद्रश्च विप्रर्षे तद् ब्रूहि वदतां वर ॥

महाभारत शान्तिपर्वे अ० १८९ श्लो १

"What is that by which a man becomes a Brahman, a Kshatriya or a Shudra· Tell me this, O *Brahma-rishi* and Foremost of speakers." *Bhrigu* said :—

जातकर्म्मादिभिर्यस्तु संस्कारैः संस्कृतः शुचिः ।
वेदाध्ययनसम्पन्नः षट्सु कर्मस्ववस्थितः ॥

*Does this not corroborate, in the plainest manner, Swami Dayanand's contention that according to the ancient Rishis the Vedas were ordained by God for all mankind including the Shudras, though on account of our cupidity many of us might not profit by their study and remain ignorant of them ?

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शौचाचारस्थितः सम्यग्विघसाशी गुरुप्रियः ।
नित्यं व्रती सत्यपरः स वै ब्राह्मण उच्यते ॥
सत्यं दानमथाद्रोह आनृशंस्यं त्रपाघृणा ।
तपश्च दृश्यते यत्र स ब्राह्मण इति स्मृतः ॥
क्षत्रजं सेवते कर्म्म वेदाध्ययनसङ्गतः ।
दानादाने रतिर्यस्तु स वै क्षत्रिय उच्यते ॥
विशत्याशु पशुभ्यश्च कृष्यादानरतिः शुचिः ।
वेदाध्ययनसम्पन्नः स वैश्य इति संज्ञितः ॥
सर्वभक्षरतिर्नित्यं सर्वकर्मकरोऽशुचिः ।
त्यक्तवेदस्त्वनाचारः स वै शूद्र इति स्मृतः ॥
शूद्रे चैतद्भवेल्लक्ष्यं द्विजे तच्च न विद्यते ।
न वै शूद्रो भवेच्छूद्रो ब्राह्मणो ब्राह्मणो न च ॥

अ० १८९ श्लो० २–७

"That person is called a *Brahman* who has been consecrated by the Sanskaras beginning with *Jat-Karma* (i. e., by the natal and other purificatory ceremonies); who has completely studied the vedas; who is engaged in the performance of the six ceremonies; who observes all pious acts, who takes his food after performing *Yajna*; who respects his preceptor; who is constant in perfoming religious observances, and who is devoted to truth. He is called a Brahman in whom are seen truth, liberality, charity, abstention from injury to others, harmlessness, modesty, compassion, benevolence and austerity. He who practises the duty of a King (protector), who is engaged in the study of the Vedas, who makes gifts and receives taxes from his subjects, is called a *Kshatriya*. He who keeps cattle, who is devoted to agriculture and other means of acquiring wealth, who is pure and has completed the study of the Vedas is called a *Vaishya*. He who takes *all* kinds of food, does *all* kinds of work, unclean, who does not study the Vedas, (lit., who has forsaken the Vedas), and who does not perform religious observances, is called a

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Shudra. These are the characteristics of a Shudra ; they are not found in a Brahman. A Shudra who possesses them is a Shudra; while a Brahman who possesses them is no Brahman."

§ 4.—EVIDENCE FROM MANUSMRITI.

It has been established beyond doubt that *Mannsmriti* was originally composed in *Sutras* (aphorisms) and not in *Shlokas* (verses), and that in its present shape it does not belong to a very ancient date, besides containing many interpolations of a positively modern date. Yet, as it is, it does not base the system of *Varnas* on mere birth : for example we read :—

विप्राणां ज्ञानतो ज्यैष्ठ्यं क्षत्रियाणां तु वीर्य्यतः ।
वैश्यानां धान्यधनतः शूद्राणामेव जन्मतः ॥

"The superiority of Brahmans rests on knowledge' of Kshatriyas on strength, of Vaishyas on wealth, and of Shudras alone on birth." That a man born in a twice, born class, but not performing the duties of that class, was degraded into the class of Shudras, is evident from such Sholkas as the following:—

योऽनधीत्य द्विजो वेदमन्यत्र कुरुते श्रमम् ।
स जीवन्नेव शूद्रत्वमाशु गच्छति सान्वयः ॥ अ० २।१६८।

"That twice-born who neglecting the study of the Vedas, devotes his energies otherwise, soon falls, together with his family, in his own life-time, into the state of Shudras."

The following *Shloka* shows that a man of a lower class could also be elevated to a higher one:—

शूद्रो ब्राह्मणतामेति ब्राह्मणश्चैति शूद्रताम् ।
क्षत्रियाज्जातमेवन्तु विद्याद् वैश्यात्तथैव च ॥ अ० १०।६५.

" A Shudra can be elevated to the state of Brahman and a Brahman may be degraded to the state of Shudra. Similarly a man born of Kshatriya parents or of Vaishya parents may be elevated or degraded according to his actions."

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§ 5.—Evidence from other Works.

Another very ancient work, *Apastambha Sutra* lays down the same rule :—

अधर्मचर्य्यया पूर्वो वर्णो जघन्यं जघन्यं वर्णमापद्यते जातिपरिवृत्तौ । १०
धर्मचर्य्यया जघन्यो वर्णो पूर्वं पूर्वं वर्णमापद्यते जातिपरिवृत्तौ । ११ ॥

"By the practice of vice, a man born in a higher class falls to (the position of) a lower class. By the practice of virtue, a man born in a lower class acquires (the position of) a higher class."

§ 6.—Evidence from the Puranas.

The *Puranas* belong to a comparatively modern date, having been composed when the caste system had already acquired its present inflexible rigidity. It is therefore natural that they should abound with passages sanctioning the system of hereditary castes. But it is not a little remarkable that even they contain some *Shlokas* which show that the ancient system of *Varmas* was not altogether forgotten even in these degenerate times. For example the *Bhagawata* having first described the respective duties and characteristics of the four Varnas (which are substantially the same as in *Manu* or *Mahabharata*), goes on to say:—

यस्य यल्लक्षणं प्रोक्तं पुंसेा वर्णाभिव्यञ्जकम् ।
यदन्यत्रापि दृश्येत तत्तेनैव विनिर्दिशेत् ॥

"If the characteristics of a particular *Varna* are seen in a man of another class, then that man should be considered to belong to that class of which he possesses the characteristics." Again in the same work *Vaishampayana* having first enumerated to Yudhishthira the characteristics of Brahmans, says :—

पञ्च लक्षणसंपन्न ईदृशो यो भवेद् द्विजः ।
तमहं ब्राह्मणं ब्रूयाम् शेषाः शूद्राः युधिष्ठिर ॥

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"That twice-born who possesses these five characteristics,—him I call a Brahmana. The rest are Shudras O, Yudhishtra."

And again :—

न कुलेन न जात्या वा क्रियाभिर्ब्राह्मणो भवेत् ।
चाण्डालोऽपिहि वृत्तस्थो ब्राह्मणः स युधिष्ठिर ॥

"Neither by family nor by birth but by actions does a man become a Brahman. Even if a *chandala* possesses a good character he is a Brahman O, Yudhishthira!"

"Neither by family nor by birth but by actions does a man become a Brahman. Even if a *chandala* possesses a good character he is a Brahman O, Yudhishthira!"

न जातिर्दृश्यते राजन् गुणाः कल्याणकारकाः ।
जीवितं यस्य धर्मार्थं परार्थं यस्य जीवितम् ।
अहोरात्रं चरेत्कान्तिं तं देवाः ब्राह्मणं विदुः ॥

"The distinction of birth is nowhere to be seen, O king! It is the qualities or merits which lead to prosperity. He who lives a pious and religious life, who lives for the good of others, and does beautiful deeds day and night,—him the learned call a *Brahmana*."

Another work *Shankara Niti* attributed to Swami Shankaracharya but belonging to the Puranic age, says:—

न जात्या ब्राह्मणश्चात्र क्षत्रियो वैश्य एव न ।
न शुद्रो न च वै म्लेच्छो भेदिताः गुणकर्मभिः ॥

"It is not by birth that a man becomes a Brahman, or a Kshatriya, or a Vaishya, or a Shudra, or even a *Mlechha*. All are divided by their qualities and actions."

§ 7.—Instances of non-Brahmans raised to Brahmanhood in Ancient India.

1. Satya kama Jabala, originally the son of a slave girl.

These extracts are enough to show that the System of *Varnas* in ancient India was not founded on the principle of birth. If any further proof be necessary we would point to numerous traditions, which occur in ancient Sanskrit literature, of many Kshatriyas,

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Vaishyas and even Shudras having been raised to the position of Brahmans. We have already referred to the beautiful story of *Satya kama Jabala* related in *Chhandogya Upanishad.*

The *Aitareya Brahmana* relates a similar story of

2. Kavasha, also the son of a slave girl.

*Kavasha,** who happened to be present at a great Yagna performed by the Rishis on the bank of the *Sarasvati.* The Rishis did not give him the Soma juice, saying:—"How should this wily man, son of a slave girl, who is no Brahman, remain among us and become initiated?" दास्याः पुत्रः कितवोऽब्राह्मणः कथं नो मध्ये दीक्षिष्ठेति. But *Kavasha* possessed divine knowledge, and when the Rishis came to know this, they recalled him and admitted him as a Rishi.

Aitareya, the author of *Aitareya Brahmana* and

3. Aitareya son of a Shudra woman.

Aitareya Upanishad was, as his very name signifies, the son of an "itara." or Shudra woman. His full name was Mahidasa Aitareya as is said in the Aitareya Brahman (1–8–2) "एतद्ध स्म वै तद् विद्वानाह महिदास ऐतरेयः" Shankaracharya thus explains the name—महिदासो नामतः इतराया अपत्य मैतरेयः "Mahidasa by name, the son of a Shudra woman."

The *Mahabharata,* the great Indian Epic, mentions

4. Vyasa, son of a woman of sailor class.

many traditions of a similar nature. *Vyasa,* the celebrated author of *Vedanta Sutras,* founder of Vedanta Philosophy and reputed author of the Mahabharata, was the son of

5. Parashara son of a chandali.

Parashara by a woman of the sailor caste (कवर्त्त); while his father Parashara himself was the son of a *Chandali,* (a woman of the lowest class. These traditions occur

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* The legend occures also in *Kaushithi Brahmana.*

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in the *Banaparva* of Mahabbharata:—

जातोव्यासस्तु कैवर्त्याः श्वपाक्यास्तु पराशरः ।
वहवोऽन्येपि विप्रत्वं प्राप्ता ये पूर्वमद्विजाः ॥ (महाभारते)

"Vyasa was born of a *Kaivarti* (कैवर्त्तो), *i. e.*, a woman of the sailor class, and Parashara of a *Chandali*. Similarly many others who were originally not twice-born became Brahmans."

6. Vasishta, son of a prostitute.

Of the origin of *Vasistha*, a Vedic Rishi of great renown the Mahabharat says:—

गणिकागर्भसंभूतो वसिष्ठश्च महामुनिः ।
तपसा ब्राह्मणो जातः संस्कारस्तत्र कारणम् ॥

"The great sage *Vasishta* was born from the womb of a prositute but he became a Brahman by penance. Thus purification of character is the chief thing, (which determines a man's *Varna*)."

7. Vishvamitra, son of a Kshatriya.

The story of the elevation of *Vishvamitra*, a Kshatriya by birth, is so famous that it occurs in many books of ancient times. We find it in the Mahabhaata, *Anushasana parva*.

ततो ब्राह्मणतां जातो विश्वामित्रो महातपाः ।
क्षत्रियः सोप्यथ तथा ब्रह्मवंशस्य कारकः ॥
(महाभारते अनुशासनपर्व)

"Then Vishvamitra of great penance attained to the state of a Brahman. He was a Kshatriya by birth; yet he became the founder of a family गोत्र of Brahmans (called *Kaushikas*)."

And again in Mahabharata, *Adiparva*, Chap: XXXVII we read:—

क्षत्रियेभ्यश्चये जाता ब्राह्मणास्ते च तेश्रुताः ।
विश्वामित्रप्रभृतयः प्राप्ता ब्रह्मत्वमव्ययम् ॥
(महाभारत आदिपर्व अ० १३७)

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"You have heard of those Brahmans who were descended from Kshatriyas, such as Vishvamitra, who attained perfect Brahmanhood.'

Vishamitra is again mentioned in *Shanti Parva* together with several other Kshatriyas who likewise became Brahmans :—

तत्रारिष्टषेणः कौरव्य ब्राह्मण्यं संशितव्रतः ।
तपसा महता राजन् प्राप्तवान् ऋषिसत्तमः ॥
सिंधुद्वीपश्चराजर्षिर्देवापिश्च महातपाः ।
ब्राह्मण्यं लब्धवान् यत्र विश्वामित्रस्तथा मुनिः ॥

(महाभारत शल्यपर्व अ० ४ श्लोक ३६–३७)

8. Arishta Shena of Kshatriya birth ;

9. also Sindhudvipa.

10. Devapi.

"There, O! king the great excellent sage *Arishta Shena* of the Kshatriya *Kaurava* family who was strict in religious observances, acquired Brahmanhood, by his great penance. Similarly the royal sage *Sindhudvipa* and *Devapi* of great penance obtained Brahmanhood like the glorious sage Vishvamitra." The *Vana parva* speaks of some other Kshatriyas who become Brahmans:—

महावीर्य्यांदुरुक्षयेा नाम पुत्रोऽभूत् । तस्य त्रय्यारुण पुष्करिणौ कपिश्च पुत्रत्रयमभूत् । तच्च त्रितयमपि पश्चाद्विप्रतामुपजगाम ४ । १९ । १०.

11. Trayyaruna,
12. Pushkarina,
13. Kapi also of Kashtriya parents.

"Mahavirya had a son named Urukshaya who had three sons *Trayyaruna*, *Pushkarina*, and *Kapi*; and all of these afterwards attained to Brahmanhood."

The *Barivansha purana*, chapter XI, speaks of two Vaishyas who became Brahmans.

नाभागारिष्ठ पुत्रौ द्वौ वैश्यौ ब्राह्मणतां गतौ । अ० ११ श्लोक ६५९.

14-15. Two sons of Nabbaga a Vaishya became Brahmans.

"Two sons of Nabhagarishta who were Vaishyas became Brahmans." From the *Bhagawat Purana* we know that Nabhaga himsef was not born in a Vaishya

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Nabhaga himself originally not a Vaishya

family, but had become a Vaishya by his actions: नाभागोनेदिष्टपुत्रोन्यः कर्म्मभिर्वैश्यतां गतः।

भागवत स्कन्ध ९ अ० २ श्लोक २६।

This is also supported by *Vishnu Purana*: नाभागो नेदिष्टपुत्रस्तु वैश्यतामगमत्। वि० ४।१।१६.

"Nabhaga, the son of Nedishta, became a Vaishya.' Does this not prove in the clearest manner that even according to the Puranas a man could, in ancient times, change his *Varna* or class in accordance with his taste and qualification ?

Men of all four varnas in the same family.

Instances of there having been men of all four classes in the same family also occur. Thus the *Vayu Puran* says about the descendants of Gritsmad, who was a vedic *rishi*, being the *rishi* of second *Mandal* of the Rigveda :—

पुत्तो गृत्समदस्य च शुनको यस्य शौनकः।
ब्राह्मणाः क्षत्रियाश्चैव वैश्याः शूद्रास्तथैवच॥
एतस्य वंशे संभूता विचित्रा कर्मभिर्द्विजाः॥

"Gritsmad's son was Sunaka, whose son was Saunaka. In his family there were men who became Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras by their different action."

§ 8.—Some Brahman Families of Kshatriya Origin.

1. *Kanvayanas* descended from king Medhatithi.

Besides these, we know from the *Puranas* that many Kshatriyas became not only Brahmans but founders of great Brahman families or *gotras*. For Example, the origin of *Kanvayanas* is thus described in the *Vishnu Purana*:—

बृहत् क्षत्रस्य सुहोत्रः सुहोत्राद्धस्ती (यद्दृतम्) हस्तिनापुरमारोपयामास। अजमील द्विमील पुरमीलाख्यो हस्तिनस्तनयाः। अजमीलात् कण्वः कण्वान्मेधातिथि यंतः काण्वायनाः द्विजाः। (विष्णुपुराण)

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"Suhotra was the son of Vrihat Kshatra. From Suhotra sprang Hasti who founded this Hastinapur, ('city of Hasti'). Hasti had three sons Ajamila, Dvimila and Puramila. From Ajamila sprang Kanva, from Kanva Medhatithi, from whom sprang the Kanvayana Brahmans." A similar (though somewhat defferent) account is given in the *Harivansha Purana*:—

पुत्रः प्रतिरथस्यासीत् कण्वः समभवन्नृपः ।
मेधातिथिः सुतस्तस्ययस्मात्कण्वोऽभवद्द्विजः (हरिवंश, अ० ३२)

"The son of Pratiratha (or Ajamila), was the King Kanva. His son was Medhatithi from whom sprang the Brahman Kanva."

2. *Gargyas* from king Shani.

The Gargyas are thus traced to Kshatriyas in the *Vishnu Purana*:—

बृहत् क्षत्र महावीर्य्य नरगर्गाद्या अभवन् मन्युपुत्राः ।
गर्गाच्छिनिस्ततो गार्ग्याः शैन्याक्षत्रोपेता द्विजातयोबभूवुः ।

"The sons of Manyu were Vrihatkshattra, Mahavirya, Nargarga and others. From Garga sprang Shini from whom were descended the Brahmanas of the Kshatriya origin called Gargyas or *Shainyas*." This is supported by the *Bhagwata Purana* गर्गाच्छिनिस्ततो गार्ग्याः क्षत्राद् ब्रह्मन्यवर्त्तत। "From Garga sprang Shini, from Shini a Kshatriya, sprang the Brahmans *Gargyas*."

Of the *Maitraiyas* the Harivansha Purana says:—

दिवो दासस्य दायादो ब्रह्मर्षिर्मित्रायुर्नृपः ।
मैत्रायणस्ततः सोमोमैत्रेयास्तु ततः स्मृताः ॥ (हरिवंश अ० ३२)

3. *Maitriyas* from king Soma Maitrayas.

"The heir of Divo Das (king of Kashi mentioned in the Mahabharata, Anushasanaparva), was the great Rishi and king Mitrayu. His son was Soma Maitrayana, from whom sprang the Maitrayas." The *Maudgalyas* are also said to be of Kshatriya origin:—मुद्गलाच्च मौद्गल्याः क्षत्रोपेताः द्विजातयो बभूवुः । (विष्णुपुराण अंश ४ अ० २९ श्लोक १६)

4. *Maudgalyas* from Mudgala.

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"From Mudgala, (a descendant of Ajamila), were descended the Maudgalyas who are Brahmans, though of Kshatriya origin." The same account is given in the *Bhagwata Purana* मुद्गलाद् ब्रह्मनिवृत्तं गोत्रमौद्गल्यसंज्ञितम् । From Mudgala sprang the Brahman family called *Maudgalyas.*"

§ 9.—Some non-Brahmans who became Vedic Rishis.

It is a most remarkable thing that many persons of the three lower classes acquired even the status of Vedic* Rishis, the highest and most respectable position in ancient Arya society. Indeed, out of 92, (the total number of Vedic Rishis according to the Harivansh Purana), —more than 25 can be shown to have sprung from the Kshatriya, Vaishya, or Shudra families. As our orthodox countrymen, seem to show much faith in the Puranas and the commentary of Sayana on the Vedas, we shall, in this part of the sction, follow the guidance of only these books. The list of Rishis already given above, (vide § 7), who were descended from non-Brahman parents contains several names of Vedic rishis also. For instance, (1) Vishvamitra, a Kshatriya by birth is the *rishi* of many Suktas in the third Mandala of the Rig Veda; (2) Vasishtha (son of a prostitute) of the seventh Mandala; (3) Kanva (of Kshatriya origin) of the eight; (4) Ajamila and (5) Purumila, (sons of Hasti, and ancestors of Kanvas), of the 43rd and 44th Suktas of the fourth; (6) Sindhudvipa and (7) Devapi (mentioned in

1. Vishvamitra,
2. Vashistha,
3. Kanva,
4. Ajamila.
5. Purumila.
6. Sindhudvipa.
7. Devapi.
8. Kavasha already mentioned.

* The *Rishi of a mantra* is the Rishi who first saw and gave to the world an explanation of that *mantra*. The author of Nirukta says:—ऋषयो मंत्रद्रष्टारः मंत्रान् संप्राददुः "Rishis are those who saw the true meaning of mantras and gave it to the world." Sayana also takes the phrase in the same sense. It does not mean a "composer of hymns" as translated by European shholars.

the Mahabharata as having become Brahmans by great penance), of the 9th and 98th Suktas of the 10th Mandala; (8) Kavasha (son of a slave girl) of the 30th to 34th Suktas of the 10th Mandala. About (9) the Angiras, *rishis* of the 9th Mandala, the *Vishnu Purana* quotes the following verse:—

एते क्षत्रप्रसूता वै पुनश्चाङ्गिरसः स्मृताः ।
रथीतराणां प्रवराः क्षत्रोपेता द्विजातयः ॥

9. Angiras of Kshatriya descent.

"These persons descended from a Kshatriya, and afterwards called Angiras, were the chief of the Rathitaras, Brahmans of Kshatriya descent."

Sayana in his commentary on the Vedas speaks of several Vedic rishis, besides the above, as having sprung from Kshatriyas. Thus on the 100th Sukta of the first Mandala he remarks:—

तत्रानुक्रम्यते स यो वृषै एकोना वार्षा गिरा ऋज्रा श्वाम्बरीष सहदेव भयमान सुराधस इति। वृषा गिरो महाराजस्य पुत्रभूताः ऋज्राश्वादयः पञ्च राजर्षयः सहेदं सूक्तं दहृशुः । अतस्ते अस्य सूक्तस्य ऋषयः ॥

10-14. Rijrashva, Ambarisha, Sahadeva, Bhayamana, Suradhas also of Kshatriya parentage.

"It is said in the Anukramanika of this Sukta beginning with the स यो वृषा, 'the rishis are (10) Rijrashva, (11) Ambari ha, (12) Sahadeva (13) Bhayamana, (14) and Suradhas sons of Vrishagir. Rijrashva and others, five Rajarshis, sons of king Vrishygir, saw thi *sukta* together. Hence they are its *rishis*." Again on Rig Ved. IV 42, Sayana remarks:—

पुरुकुत्सस्य पुत्रस्त्रसदस्यु राजा ऋषिः । अत्रानुक्रमणिका "ममाद्विता दशत्रसदस्युः पौरुकुत्स्यः" ॥

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15. Trasaddasyu also of a Kshatriya family.

"The *rishi* of this Sukta is (15) the king Trasaddasyu, son of Purukutsya. On this the Anukramanika says: 'Trasaddasyu son of Purukutsya is the *rishi* of this Sukta beginning with **मम द्विता**, consisting of ten *mantras*.' On Rig Ved. V—27 Sayana remarks:—

त्रिवृष्णास्य पुत्रस्त्र्यरुणः पुरुकुत्सस्य पुत्रस्त्रसदस्युः भरतस्य पुत्राऽश्वमेध एते त्रयोपि राजानः संभूयास्य सूक्तस्य ऋषयः ॥

16-17. So also Tryaruna and Ashvamedha

(16) "Trivrishna's son Tryaruna, (15) Trasaddasyu son of Purukutsya, (17) Ashvamedha son of Bharata, these three all kings are together the *rishis* of this *Sukta*."

and 18-25 Vitahavya, Sindhukshita, Sudas, Mandhatri, Vasumona, Sibi, Pratardna, and Prithi.

The following *rishis* are also said to have been of Kshatriya descent:—(18) Vitahavya or Bhardvaja *rishi* of Rig Veda VI. 15; (19) Sindhukshita son of Prujamedha, of Rig X-75; (20) Sudas son of Pijavana of Rig X-133 (21) Mandhatri, son of Yuvanasva and related to the Angiras, of Rig Veda X-134; (22) Vasumanas and (23) Sibi conjointly with (24) Pratardana, son of Divodasa king of Kasi, (probably the same as Mitraya mentioned in the Harivansha Purana to have been the founder of Maitrayana family), of Rig Veda X-179; (25) Prithi son of Vena of Rig Veda X-148.

The *Matsya Purana* (Ch. 132) speaks of three eminent *rishis* among the Kshatriyas and three among Vaishyas:

मनुर्वैवस्वतश्चैव इडो राजा पुरूरवाः ।
क्षत्रियाणां वराह्येते विज्ञेया मंत्रवादिनः ॥
भलन्दश्चैव वन्ध्यश्च संकीर्त्तिश्चैव ते त्रयः ।
एते मन्त्रकृतो ज्ञेया वैश्यानां प्रवराः सदा ॥

"Manu son of Vivasvata, Ida, and king Pururavas, these are to be known as the eminent *rishis* among the Kshatriyas. Bhalanda, Vandya and Sankirtti,—these

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are always to be known as three eminent *rishis* among the Vaishyas." And then the Purana concludes its summary of the Vedic rishis:—

इत्येकनवतिः प्रोक्ताः मन्त्रायैश्च बहिःकृताः ।
ब्राह्मणाः क्षत्रिया वैश्या ऋषिपुत्रान् निबोधत ॥

"Thus ninety-one persons have been declared by whom *mantras* have been given forth,—Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. Know these sons of Rishis.

Happy times these when learning, piety and character opened the way to the highest honour and position in society, and the liberties of the people were not fettered by the artificial restrictions of *Caste*! Little wonder then if under these healthy circumstances the Indians became not only one of the foremost nations in the ancient world, but also the spiritual teachers of all mankind. But alas! the old excellent system of *varnas* gradually degenerated into a system of hereditary castes, justly called by Sir H. S. Maine "the most disastrous and blighting of human institutions."

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Chapter 11.

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF CASTE SYSTEM.

First beginning of caste.

The first beginning of a hereditary caste system is to be found in the distinction of *race* between the Aryan invaders and the non-Aryan aborigines of India. For a long time they were at war with each other. The Aryans came to this country as a conquering and civilizing race, and brought with them a much higher civilization and purer religion than were possessed by the people among whom they settled. It was only natural that at first they kept themselves socially aloof from the races whom they conquered and designated *Dasyus* or *Dasas* on account of their lawlessness. Difference of religion and language, civilisation and manners, race and colour, separated them from the aborigines. Not only their pride as conquerors but the very instinct of self-preservation must have in the first instance led them to adopt this policy of aloofness, and to avoid being lost in the great mass of non-Aryan population.

Distinction of race between Aryans and non-Aryans.

This distinction between the conquerors and the conquered, the Aryans and the Dasyus, was the only great distinction that existed in the earliest times. We often find it mentioned in the Vedas; for example in Rig Veda 1, 10, 51 8, we read **विजानीह्यार्य्यान् ये चदस्यवो ।**

But the policy of aloofness from the aborigines,

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(natural and inevitable in those circumstances), was not one of permanent exclusion. As times passed on, large numbers of non-Aryans adopted the manners and languag of their conquerors, and they were gradually admitted into the pale of Aryan civilization and religion. They generally formed the *Shudra* class. In later Sanskrit *Shudra* and *Dasa* have come to be regrd-garded as synonymous terms. But in the Vedas they differ very much in their significance.

Gardual admission of Non-Aryans into Aryan society,

Shudra Class.

The word * *Dasa* or *Dasyu* is applied to those non-Aryans who refused to come within the pale of Aryan civilization continued at war with the Aryas and lived a lawless life. While the term *Shudra* signified those non-Aryans who had accepted the Aryan civilization, and obeyed laws, but were not yet sufficiently enlightened to be admitted into the inner pale of Aryan society consisting of the three higher classes or the "twice-born". This class also comprised those who having been Aryas had fallen from the position of 'twice-born' on account of not observing the social and religious rules enjoined for them. Thus the *Shudras* were an intermediate class between the Aryans proper and the non-Aryans. But while the *Dasyu* had no place in the Aryan polity and was the very antithesis of an Arya, the *Shudra* was an essential part of the body politic.

Shudras and *Dasuyas* distinguished.

In the entire range of the Vedas the word *Shudra* is never used with the feelings of contempt and hostility which are always associated with the *Dasyus* or

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* **Both of these words are derived from the root दस 'to destroy, and mean, a thief or robber, a destroyer or murderer.**

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Dasas. We shall quote a few Vedic verses on the point.*

The Vedas and *Dasyus*.

(1) About *Dasyus* or *Dasas*:—

वधीर्हिदस्युं धनिनं धनेन एकश्चरन्नुपशाकेभिरिन्द्र । धनोरधि विषुणक्तेव्यायन्न यज्वानः सनका प्रेतिमीयुः ऋ० १ । ३३ । ४

"O, Indra! With your prowess and thunderbolt destroy the resourceful *Dasyu*, moving alone. Let the unrighteous men and thieves and robbers meet their death with your bow" Rig. 1, 33, 4.

विजानीह्यार्य्यान् ये च दस्यवो बर्हिष्मते । रन्धया शासदव्रतान् । शाकीभव यजमानस्य चोदिता विश्वेत्ता ते सधमादेषुचाकन ॥ ऋ० १ । ५ । ७

"Know the Aryas, and those who are *Dasyus*. For the sake of the righteous destroy or subjugate the lawless and bring them to order. Omnipotent Lord! be the helper of the righteous. I seek the fulfilment of all the laws." Rig. 1, 51, 7.

वित्वक्षणः समृतौ चक्रमासजोऽसुन्वतो विषुणः सुन्वतो वृधः । इन्द्रो विश्वस्यद् भिताविभीषणो यथा वशं नयति दासमार्य्यः ऋ० ५ । ३४ । ६

"The terrible Arya King (or leader) well armed, able to defeat his foes in battle, opposed to the unsacrificing, upholder of the sacrificing, civilizer of all, gradually brings the *Dasa* under his control." Rig, V, 34 6.

The Vedas and *Shudras*.

(2) About the *Shudras*.—

रुचं नो धेहि ब्राह्मणेषु रुचं राजसु नस्कृधिः । रुचं विश्वेषु शूद्रेषु मयिधेहि रुचारुचम् ॥ यजु० १८ । ४८

"Give us love for the Brahmans, love for the Kshatriyas, love for the Vaishyas, and love for the Shudras. Give us mutual love."

प्रियं मां दर्भ कृणु ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्यां शूद्राय चार्य्यायच । यस्मै च कामयामहे सर्वस्मैच विपश्यते । अथर्व १९ । ३२ । ८

*The subject has been ably discussed by P. Shiva Shanker Kavyatirtha in his excellent Hindi book on caste "Jati Nirnaya" (published by the Punjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabha) to which we refer the curious reader, and from which we have taken the above verses.

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"O Just God make me loving to the Brahmanas and Kshattriyas to the Shudras and the Vaishyas. Make me loving to all that I see." Atharva XIX, 32, 8.

It is thus clear that if the Vedic Aryas despised the *Dasyus* they did so not on account of their race, but on account of their lawlessness. They did not depise the Shudras.

In later ages as more and more of the aborigines were Aryanized and the number of marauding *Dasyus* dwindled, the term *Dasyu* dropped out of use. While the term *Dasa* (though originally having the same meaning) underwent an elevation corresponding to that which had taken place in the social and moral position of those who had borne that name. It became almost synonymous with *Shudra*, and then acquired the meaning of a servant. The process of elevation continued till the word *Dasa* lost all its venom. As the author of *Jati Nirnaya* remarks, even such saintly persons as Tulsi Das and Sur Das came to have it as an appendage to their names. On the contrary the word *Shudra*, with the growth of hereditary castes, and the consequent social degradation of the Shudra class, has degenerated in its significance, meaning a man who is under a social ban and whose elevation society would not permit.

Degeneration of the word *Sudra*.

If the non-Aryans who entered Aryan society generally did so as Shudras, it was because of their morally low condition. But it is not to be supposed that in the Vedic age the door of further progress was closed against them, or that the treatment then accorded to them was what it became in a later age. We have already given several instances of men of Shudra parentage having been elevated to the highest position which society in those days could offer. Intermarriage with Shudras was

Shudras in the Vedic age.

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not forbidden and intermarriage implies interdining. An Arya, whether a Brahman, or Kshatriya, or Vaishya could take a Shudra wife* even as late as the time of *smritis*. A Shudra could not ordinarily marry a woman of twice-born class. This is called the rule of ***hypergamy*** (or अनुलोम *anuloma*) and is explained by the fact that as the Aryans came in successive conquering bands, they must have brought with them fewer women than men from the original Aryan home. In later times when the caste system became rigid, the Shudras were debarred from acquiring knowledge, at least sacred knowledge. But such was not the case in the Vedic times. What can be more explicit than the following verse:—

Intermarriage between them and Aryas.

Shudras not excluded from religious knowledge.

यथेमां वाचं कल्याणीमावदानि जनेभ्यः ।
ब्रह्मराजन्याभ्याम् शूद्राय चार्य्याय स्वाय चारणा य ॥ यजु० ।२६।२॥

"Even as I proclaim this blessed speech (*i. e.*, the Vedas) to all men, Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Shudras, and one's servants." Yajurveda XXVI, 2†

Throughout the four Vedas you will search in vain for a single passage which can show that the Shudras were excluded from religious knowledge or religious rites, or that they were despised as untouchable or unclean.

Among the Aryans proper there was no distinction based on heredity. The ***varnas*** or Brahmans, Kshattriyas, Vaishyas, were, as already stated, functional or occupa-

No hereditary castes among early Aryas.

* Vide Manusmriti III, 13.

शद्रैव भार्य्या शूद्रस्य साच स्वाच विशः स्मृते ।
तेच स्वाचैव राज्ञश्च ताश्च स्वाचाग्रजन्मनः ॥१॥

"A Shudra woman alone can be wife of a Shudra; she or a Vaishya of a Vaishya; they or a Kshattriya woman of a Kshattriya; and they or a Brahman woman of a Brahman?"

†Also see the verses from the Mahabharat Shanti Parva, and the foot-note thereon, page 6.

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tional classes, and not hereditary ones. And this division was by no means peculiar to the Indo-Aryans. "In the religious record of the Iranians, who are so nearly allied, in the Zend Avesta," says Dr. Haug, "the four castes are quite plainly to be found, only under other names,—(1) *Atharva* 'priest' Skr. Atharvan (2) ***Rathaestao*** 'warrior,' (3) ***Vastriyafshiyas*** 'cultivator,' (4) ***Huitis***, (Pehl. Hutokhsh) 'workman' (Yasna 9, 1*h* Werterg)."

The four *varnas* not castes.

Sir Henry Risley, (then Census Commissioner) has in his *Census of India* for 1901, and also in his work. *The people of India** advanced the strange proposition that "the Indian theory must have been remodelled on the Iranian." Just the reverse is the truth. Professor Darmestetier, the learned translator of the ZEND AVESTA, (Sacred Books of the East series) correctly remarks: "We find in it the description of the four classes, which strikingly reminds one of the Brahmanical account of the origin of castes (Ch. XLII), and which were certainly borrowed from India" (ZEND AVESTA, Vol. I, Introd. p. XXXIII). Sir Henry Risley however admits that the classes of ancient Persia were "purely occupational." Nor was this classification peculiar to only the Indo-Iranian branch of the Aryan race. It corresponds to the four-fold classification in Medieval Europe of all people into *(1)* the clergy *(2)* the baronage *(3)* the people and *(4)* the serfs.

How these occupational classes and tribal divisions arising from the intermixture of the Aryans and the non-Aryans led in India to the formation of hereditary and endogamous castes, while in Persia and Europe the fusion of races and tribes helped in the formation of nations and

Why were castes developed in India only?

* Vide *Census of India, Report*, Vol. I., p. 598, and the *People of India*, pp. 251-252.

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nationalities is rather a vexed question. Some authors have ascribed this peculiar phenomenon of "castes" to the existence of a large proportion of non-Aryans in India than in other countries which the ancient Aryans conquered and colonized. Probably there is an element of truth in this suggestion. For a long period the Aryans proper continued to take men of Shudra parentage into their ranks. They also took wives from the Shudra class, and the fusion of the two races went on. Then partly through fear of being lost among the aborigines, partly because they had bred enough women among themselves, and partly through pride of their superior race, they closed their ranks, and refused to marry among Shudras. The twice-born Aryans and the Shudras thus became two distinct endogamous groups. Intermarriage between the two was now out of the question, and the barrier became impenetrable. The next stage was reached when the Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas likewise became separate endogamous units. The ever increasing supremacy and fancied sanctity of the priestly class, the haughtiness and pride of the military class, and the feebleness and passiveness of the middle class, helped this disintegration. The process of bifurcation when once commenced did not stop, and each class was subdivided into smaller and smaller groups. Different sections of the community must have represented different degrees in which the fusion of the two races had been carried on. When once the idea of *birth* as the chief criterion of social status and respectability was formed it caught on. Each group, proud of its fancied

Large non-Aryan population.

Strengthening of the barrier between Aryans and non-Aryans. Formation of a permanent caste.

Splitting of Aryans proper into 3 main castes.

Further subdivisions.

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purity, considered itself superior to others and refused to intermarry with them. Difference of occupation, of locality, of customs, and many other similar causes have helped to carry on the work of disruption, and have split up each caste into numberless petty sub-divi ions de - troying all social unity.

Their formation in *Puranic* times.

It should be noted that all this took place in comparatively recent times or in the '*Puranic* age,' when the true and sublime religion of the *Vedas* and the noble philosophy of the *Upanishads* and *Darshanas*, had already been wrecked on the rock of ignorance. Says Mr. C. R. Dutt: "It never should be forgotten however that the worse result of that system did not appe r and could not appear until the Hindus had ceased to be a nation. In the Epic period, (the period of the Mahabharat), the body of the people, except the priests and soldiers, still formed one united Vaishya* caste, and had not been disunited into such miserably divided communities as in the modern day. The body of the people were still entitled to religious knowledge and learning and to perform religious rites for themselves just like Brahmans and Kshattriyas. And even intermarriage between Brahmans, Kshattriyas, and Vaishyas was allowed under certain restrictions. However much therefore we may deplore the commencement of the caste system, we shou d never forget that the worst result of that system, *the priestly monopoly of learning, the dis-union in the body of the people, and the absolute social separation*, were unknown in India until the "Puranic times" (*Civilization in Ancient India*, pp. 167-168).

Sir Herbert Risley also admits: "Yet in the stage of development portrayed in the Law books (or *Smritis*) the system has not hardened into the rigid mechanism

* The word Vaishya comes from "Vish" meaning "People."

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of the present day. It is still more or less fluid; it admits of intermarriage under the limitations imposed by the rule of hypergamy; it represents caste in the making, not caste as it has since been made." (*The People of India*, p. 252).

Sir Herbert Risley continues:—"This process of caste making has indeed by no means come to an end. Fresh castes are constantly being formed, and wherever we can trace the stages of their evolution they seem to proceed on the lines followed in the traditional scheme. The first stage, is for a number of families who discover in themselves some quality of social distinction, to refuse to give their women in marriage to other members of the caste from whom nevertheless they continue to take wives. After a time when their numbers have increased and they have bred women enough to supply material for a *jus connubii* of their own, they close their ranks, marry only among themselves, and pose as a superior sub-caste of the main caste to which they belong. Last of all, they break all connection with the parent stock, assume a new name which ignores or disguises their original affinities, and claim general recognition as a distinct caste. The educated Pods of Bengal are an illustration of the first stage; the Chasi Kaibartta of the second; the Mahisya of the third)." *Ibid*, pp. 252-253, or *The Census* of *India Report*, p. 549). The above will surprise some of our reformers who allow themselves to be deluded by a pleasing hallucination that the bonds of caste are at last breaking under the disruptive forces of modern ideas! The *Census Report* contains facts and figures which show the hollowness of this view. Even Railways which are supposed to be such a solvent factor only relax the minor injunctions about food or drink; on the contrary by

Fresh castes still forming.

Process of caste making.

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facilitating communication and travelling, they bring about a more rigid observance of the essential restrictions of caste, *viz.*, those relating to marriage.

So far as the influence of the caste predominant in India that even Mohammadanism and Christianity have not escaped its contagion. "In India," says Sir Herbert Risley, "caste is in the air; its contagion has spread even to the Mohamma 'ens, and we find its evolution proceeding on characteristically Hindu lines. In both communities foreign descent forms the highest claim to social distinction; in both promotion cometh from the West. As the twice-born Aryan is to the mass of Hindus, so is the Mohammadan of Arab, Persian, Afghan or Moghal origin to the rank and file of his co-religionists. And just as in the traditional Hindu system men of the higher groups could marry women of the lower while the converse process was rigorously condemned, so within the higher ranks of the Mohammadans a Saiyad will marry a Sheikh's daughter, but will not give his daughter in return, and intermarriage between the upper circle of soi-distant foreigners and the main body of Indian Mohammadans is generally reprobated except in parts of the country where the aristrocratic element is small and must arrange its marriages as best it can. Even then, however, it is only under the stress of great poverty that a member of the *Ashraf* or 'Noble, class will give his daughter to one of the *Ajlaf* or' Low people "as converts of indigenous origin are called in Bengal" (*People of India*, p. 118; or *The Census of India, Report*, p. 543).

Influence of caste on Indian Mohammadanism.

"Even Christianity," says Sir Herbert Risley, "has not altogether escaped the subtle contagion of caste. Almost everywhere in India a tendency has been observed on

On Indian Christianity.

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the part of converts from Hinduisim to group themselves according to the castes to which they originally belonged. This sometimes assumes the form of a division into two groups, the higher restricted to those who were members of the 'clean' castes from whom Brahmans can ta e water, while the lower comprises all those of inferior rank. On the west coast the retention of the caste distinctions was deliberately recognised by the Portugese missionaries and the results of this policy have survived down to the present day. 'The Indian Roman Catholic Christians of the Konkan, the low-lying strip of coast between the Western Ghats and the sea, are divided into Bambans or Bammans (Brahmans), Chorodas or Chardos (Kshatriyas or Chhatri), Sudirs, (Sudras), Renders (drawers of palm juice), Gavids or Gavdas (salt makers), Modvals (washermen), Kumhars (potters), and Kappris or Sidis (labourers), whose thick lips, slanting foreheads and curly beards suggest an infusion of Somali blood. Intermarriages among these groups, while not absolutely forbidden, are said to be rare though in South Kanara such unions are gradually becoming more frequent in cases in which members of castes other than the Bammans have succeeded in obtaining a good position in the official, legal, or commercial community' (*Manual of South Kanara*). Infant marriage is forbidden among the Konkani Christians, but girls are married as soon as they are twelve years old and sometimes even before that age under a special dispensation of the Bishops. Widow-marriage though not forbidden is as much condemned as among the pagans." (*The People of India*, p. 79).

Causes of formation of castes summed up.

The principal causes which have led and are still leading to the formation of new castes or sub-castes may be thus summed up:—

(1) *Difference of Race: The natural desire of original tribes for social elevation.* Sir Herbert Risley thus illustrates it. "The leading men of an original tribe having somehow got on in the world and become independent landed proprietors, manage to enrol themselves in one of the more distinguished castes. They usually set up as Rajaputs, their first step being to start a Brahman priest who invents for them a mythical ancestor, supplies them with a family miracle connected with the locality where the tribe is settled, and discovers that they belong to some hitherto unheard of clan of the great Rajaput community." *The People of India*, p. 71). New castes in this way are still forming. The object of course is to get the social status which the present day Hinduism unjustly denies to those born among Shudras.

Difference of race

(2) *Difference of Religion.* It is a most painful fact the lesson of which should never be lost on our reformers, that a hasty attempt to do away with caste altogether, has often resulted only in the formation of some new caste or castes. A number of castes were originally religious sects which in one form or other preached the equality of all men, and recruited their members from all castes. Such are the *Bishnois*, a caste found chiefly in the Moradabad, Bijnor, and Meerut districts of the United Provinces. "The caste," says Mr. R. Burn, I. C. S., in his *Census Report of N. W. P. & Oudh* for 1901, "was originally a sect comprised of the followers of one Jambhaji and its members were taken from various castes, chiefly Jats and Barhais (or Khatis), with some Rajputs and Banias. The original members of the caste are said to have been outcasted owing to their having eaten with Jambhaji, and it is now composed of a number of endogamous

2. Difference of religious belief.

Instance of Bishnois,

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groups corresponding to the castes that joined the sect,"* (p. 226).

Sadhs.

Another instance is the *Sadhs* of Farrukhabad, Barielly, and Mirzapur districts. "Recruits," says Mr. Burn, "are no longer admitted, and it is peculiar that no endogamous or exogamous divisions exist in this, the only restriction on marriage being that intermarriage is forbidden between two families as long as the recollection of former marriage connection between them remains. The instance is of special interest as the equality maintained by the tenets of the sect, which has developed into a caste, has not yet been destroyed as is usual in such cases" (*Ibid* p. 214.)

Lingayats.

"A notable instance of this tendency to revert to the normal type of Hindu society, "says Sir Herbert Risley, "is to be found in the present condition of the Lingayats or Virshaiv caste of Bombay and Southern India which numbers 2,600,000 adherents. Founded as a sect in the 12th century by a reformer who proclaimed the doctrine of the equality of all who received the eight-fold sacrament ordained by him, and wore on their persons the mystic *phallus* emblematic of the god *Siva*, the Lingayats community had begun by the close of the 17th century to develop endogamous sub-castes based upon the social distinctions which their founder had expressly abjured. At the recent census the process of transforming the sect into a caste had advanced still further. In a petition presented to the Government of India the members of the Lingayat community protested against

* Elsewhere (p. 214) Mr. Burn enumerates 9 endogamous groups or sub-castes of the Bishnois called after the castes from which they were recruited, and adds: "New converts take their place in the appropriate sub-caste."

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the "most offensive and mischievous order" that all of them should be entered in the census papers as belonging to the same caste, and asked that they might be recorded as Virshaiv Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, or Shudras as the case might be. "It would be difficult," justly remarks the Census Commissioner, "to find a better illustration of the essentially particularistic instinct of the Indian people and of the aversion with which they regard the doctrine that all men are equal." (*The Census of India Report*, p. 522).

Saraks.

Sir Herbert Risley has given similar instances from other parts of India. He speaks of "the *Saraks* of Western Bengal, Chutia Nagpur, and Orissa, who seem to be a Hinduised remnant of the early Jain people... But the survival of their ancient faith have not saved them from the all-pervading influence of caste. They have split up into endogamous groups...and they now form a Hindu caste of the ordinary type. The same fate has befallen the Gharbari Atiths, the Sanyasis, the Jugis, the Jati Baishtams of Bengal, the Banhra of Nepal." (*Census of India Report*, pp. 522-23).

Atiths, &c.

Jains and Sikhs.

What Sir H. Risley says of the *Saraks* of Bengal is equally true of all *Jains* and also of the *Sikhs*, who are now split up into several castes, though their religions were originally intended to be a protest against the caste.

3. Difference of occupation.

(3) *Difference of Occupation.* A large number of castes seem to be occupational. Every one of them professes to have a traditional occupation, though many of its members have now given it up. Of such castes are:—the *Ahirs* or herdsmen, the *Chamars* or workers in leather, the *Bhangis* and *Doms* or scavengers, the *Kewats* (Kaivartas) or fishermen, the *Koeris* and *Kachhis* or

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market gardeners, the *Kumhars* or potters, the *Kahars* or water-bearers, the *Pods* or fishermen, the *Sunars* or goldsmiths, the *Luhars* or blacksmiths, the *Barhais* or carpenters; the *Telis* or oilmen; the *Nais* or barbers.

4. Difference of locality.

(4) *Difference of Locality.* This has given rise to many sub-castes. For example the Brahmans have been divided into *Kashmiris*, *Gujratis*, *Sarasvatas* or those living near the Sarasvati, *Kanyakubja* or *Kannaujiyas* or those living in Kanuauj, *Saryuparis* or those living on the other side of the Saryu. Sir H. Risley remarks: "If members of a caste leave their original habitat and settle permanently in another part of India, the tendency is for them to be separated from the parent group and to develop into a distinct caste. The stages of the process are readily traced. In the first instance it is assumed that people who go and live in foreign parts must of necessity eat forbidden foods, worship alien gods, and enter into relations with strange women. Consequently when they wish to take wives from among their own people, they find that their social status has been lowered and that they have to pay for the privilege of marrying within the parent group. This luxury grows more and more expensive, and in course of time the emigrants marry only among themselves, and thus become a sub-caste usually distinguished by a territorial name such as Jaunpuria, Tirhutiya, Barendra, and the like. Mr. Gait has pointed out that "the prolonged residence of persons of Bihar castes in Bengal generally results in their being placed under a ban as regards marriage, and I had observed some years earlier that up-country barbers who settle in Bengal are called *khotta* and practically form a separate sub caste as Bengali barbers will not intermarry with them, while they are regarded as impure by the barbers of Upper India and Bihar by

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reason of their having taken up their residence in Bengal" (*The census of India Report* pp. 526-527; *The people of India* p. 87).

(5) *Difference of customs.*—Sir H. Risley speaks of a tendency observable in many of the lower castes to seek to raise their social status by imitating what are two of the principal social evils of the "higher" castes, *viz.* enforced widowhood, and early marriage. "The first step is to abstain from intermarriage with people who practise the forbidden thing, and thus to form a sub-caste which adopts a high sounding name derived from some famous locality like Ajodhya or Kannauj...... Thus the Awadhia or Ajodhya Kurmis of Bihar, and Kanaujiya Kurmis of the United Provinces pride themselves on prohibiting the re-marriage of widows, and are endeavouring to establish a shadowy title to be recognised as some variety of Kshatriyas..................In Southern India movements of the same sort may be observed. Among the begging castes............in Madras, the Pandarams rank highest in virtue of their abstention from meat and alcohol, and more specially of their prohibition of widow marriage............The *Jatapu* again, a branch of the Kandh (Kondh) tribe which has developed into a separate caste are beginning to discourage widow marriage by way of emphasising the distinction betwen themselves and their less-civilized brethren. In Baroda according to Mr. Dalal, widow marriage is allowed by some degraded sub-castes of Brahmans, Tapodhan, Vyas Saraswat, Rajgar Bhojak, Trogola and Kaligar, which are virtually distinct castes, and also by the Kathis, Marathas, Rajputs, Toghers, and Vadhels. "The higher families among castes allowing remarriage of widow do not, as a rule, have recourse to it, as such a marriage is considered undignified for grown up women;

5 Difference of custom.

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It is this sense of honour and a desire to pass for superior people that has put a stop to widow remarriage among an influential section of the Lewa Kunbis and Sonis," (*The Census of India Report*, pp. 529-30). This illustrates how the false pride of birth, which is the essence of caste, promotes other social evils and prevents social reform. What a pity that while educated Hindus of the higher castes have begun to discourage early marriage, and to encourage widow remarriage, their less educated brethren of the lower castes are doing just the opposite in the hope of raising themselves in the scale of castes! And in doing so they are also creating fresh sub-castes.

Selfishness of priestly class.

The *selfishness of the priestly class* of Puranic age has also been factor in bringing about the present state of the castes. This is evident from numerous *shlokas* of the following nature:—

अविद्यो वा सविद्यो वा ब्राह्मणो मामकी तनुः ।
अद्यापिश्रूयते घोषो द्वारिकायाम् पुनः पुनः ॥

"A Brahman, (says the god Krishna), whether literate or illiterate, is my own person. This cry is heard in Dwarika again and again even to-day."

पतितोपि द्विजः श्रेष्ठो न च शूद्रो जितेन्द्रियः ।
निर्दुग्धा चापि गौःपूज्या न च दुग्धवती खरी ॥

"Even a fallen (or vicious) Brahmana is good, and not a Shudra even if virtuous. Even a dry cow is to be respected, and not a milk-giving she-ass."

What a sad picture of society do these *shlokas* present, when compared with the extracts which we have quoted from the Mahabharata and other books! Helped by these and other similar causes the caste system has gone on throwing coil after coil round the nation till it has reduced all to the miserable state of willing bondsmen!

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CHAPTER [illegible].

EVILS OF CASTE SYSTEM.

We shall now proceed to describe the *disadvantages of this institution*, and first we shall begin with its social inconveniences.

§ I. Caste has led to many Social Inconveniences.

1. Undue restrictions in eating and drinking

The Hindus of to-day are split up into thousands of petty sub-divisions which are separated from each other by impassable barriers. This is the cause of several social evils. ***First it has led to undue restrictions in eating and drinking.*** Each caste is filled with an overweening sense of its importance and refuses to eat with another. In some cases (as among the Kanoujias) persons of the same caste would refuse to eat with each other. This is a serious inconvenience. No wonder that the gulf thus created has gone on widening and the Hindus of the present day being thus dis-united by castes and sub-castes, feel no sympathy with each other except in the narrow circles of their own castes.

2. Unsuitable matrimonial matches.

Secondly it leads to unsuitable matrimonial matches. In every caste there are so many petty sub-divisions refusing to intermarry with each other that the choice of a bride or bridegroom is confined within exceedingly narrow limits. Under such restrictions the difficulties of selecting a suitable wife or husband become simply enormous. If a man has an educated daughter and desires to select for her a fit husband he must marry her to one of his own caste, no matter how unsuitable

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the match is. Many girls are thus given away to unsuitable husbands and have their whole life blighted to appease this Demon of caste. This difficulty of getting suitable husbands drives many parents of even reformed views to betroth and marry their girls at an early age. *Thus an indirect stimulus is given to early marriage.* Again the marriage of persons belonging to a small caste and therefore necessarily related to each other by blood *leads* naturally enough *to physical degeneracy.* This is another evil which is indirectly encouraged by marriage in the same caste.

3. Indirect stimulus to early marriage.

4. Physical degeneracy

But the above inconveniences are trifling when we compare them with the more serious evils for which the caste system is responsible and which we shall now describe.

§ 2.—It has been injurious to Trade and Arts.

When the system of castes first began it was simple enough. True, the nation was disunited, but not into more than four 'castes.' The priests (Brahmans), and military men (Kshatriyas) formed two distinct classes; and the Shudras also constituted a separate class. But the body of the people called *Vaishyas* or *Vis* (lit. people,) were still united. Agriculture, and almost all trades, professions, and arts were still in their hands. They formed a respectable portion of the nation; nor were the arts and trades, pursued by them, despised in any way. But as the caste system grew it became more and more complicated. The process of disintegration when once begun, never stopped. Every profession had a tendency to become a distinct caste. And when, it was once separated from the bulk of the Vaishya community, it became isolated

Disintegration of the Vaishyas or 'people.'

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and was placed on the same level with the Shudras.

Consequent degradation of arts and commerce.

As time went on more and more professions were taken away from the great Vaishya class and were in course of time looked down upon as unworthy of the twice-born. It was by this process that goldsmiths, blacksmiths, carpenters, architects, oil manufacturers, musicians, and men of numerous other professions were formed into separate castes. That they were despised by the high-born Brahmans and Kshatriyas as almost Shudras is sufficiently evident from the *Smritis*, which (though

Evidence from Smritis.

ascribed to ancient Rishis) were composed in the Puranic age. For *Yajnavalkya* (Ch. I, Shlokas 160–65) condemns a large class of professions as impure, and lays down that the food of the people of these professions cannot be touched. "It is with pain that the historian of the Hindus finds in this passage all mechanical arts, trades and industries classed with prostitution and crime. For the list includes misers, men in fetters, thieves, eunuchs, *actors*, *workers in leather* (Vainas), men who are cursed, Vardhushis, prostitutes, men who initiate indiscriminately, *physicians* (chikitsaka), diseased men, ill-tempered men, faithless women, drunkards, envious men, cruel and violent men, outcastes, Vratyas, conceited men, impure eaters, unprotected women, *goldsmiths*, hen-pecked husbands, indiscriminate priests, *sellers of arms*, *blacksmiths*, *weavers*, eater of dogs, cruel men, king's officers, *dyers*, ungrateful men, men who kill animals, *washermen*, liquor-vendors, cuckolds, back-biters, liars, *oil manufacturers*, flatterers and vendors of the Soma wine. How many honest trades do we find in this list of despised professions!" (R. C. Dutt. *Civilization in Ancient India*, pp. 680–81). Strange as it might appear, such Shlokas have also found their way into the *Manusmriti* which,

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as we have already remarked, is not in its present shape, the work of the great Rishi whose name it bears. Mr. Dutt refers to many such passages (*viz*.. Manu III 152, 155, 160, 162, 163, and 166; IV 84, 210, 212, 215, 216, and 219; and X 84), in which a large number of useful professions are condemned as impure, and then aptly remarks: "This is a pretty comprehensive list! If we exclude physicians, shop-keepers, singers, actors, trainers of animals, bird fanciers, instructors in arms, architects, oil manufacturers, carpenters, washermen, hunters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, manufacturers of baskets and arms, *all* artisans, *all* shepherds, *all* agriculturists, who then are left in the nation to receive honour? *Priests and Kings*!"

Degraded professions.

In another place he asks: "How could mechanical arts and industries flourish in a land where sellers of arms, goldsmiths and blacksmiths, weavers and dyers, washermen and oil manufacturers were condemned as impure?" (p. 681).

Its pernicious effects on Indian trade and arts.

Mr. Dutt then goes on to describe the blighting effects of this narrow-minded and ignoble caste prejudice on the arts and trade of India. His remarks are so just and are at the same time couched in so beautiful a language that we shall make no apology to quote them at length:—

R. C. Dutt quoted.

"The results were disastrous, so far as arts were concerned. Genius was impossible, except among priests and kings. Men held in a perpetual moral bondage and servitude never learnt to aspire after greatness and glory. Men to whom honour was impossible never learnt to deserve honour and distinction. In other countries a Cincinatus might leave his plough and wield the destinies of his

Aspirations of Shudra artists stifled.

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nation, or a Robert Burns might give expression to a nation's sentiments in thoughts that breathe and words that burn; but in India the cultivator's fate was sealed; he could never break through the adamant wall of social rules. Among other people a sculptor, a painter or an architect, like Phœdias or Praxiteles, like Raphæl or Michæl Angelo, might by the force of his genius win the highest honor in his country. But in India that highest honor was the exclusive privilege of the Brahman and the Kshatriya; honor to an architect, to a sculptor was simply out of the question. Under healthier influences the noblest artisan or engineer might rise to be a Watt or a Stevenson, but in India the artisan and the engineer were chained by shackles of steels, which it was impossible for them to break. Held in comparative degradation and contempt the artisan and the mechanic never learnt to soar beyond the fixed rules of their art, and gave no indications of a great idea, a bold conception, a new invention or an original genius. Hindu architects covered India from Orissa and Ellora to Tanjore and Rameshwaram with temples and edifices of which we shall speak in a future chapter. The patience, the industry, the attention to minute details, the ingenuity, and the skill displayed in these works will bear comparison with those of any nation, ancient or modern, on the face of the earth. But the conception of a great architect, the genius of a true artist is often wanting in these magnificent edifices. A Brahman poet in Ujjayini has conceived a Shakuntala in verse, but there is no Shakuntala in stone among the millions of sculptured figures in India!"

Decay of genius

"By her position and her civilisation India should have been the mistress of the Indian Ocean, as Greece and Rome were of the

Want of maritime enterprise.

navy, should have swept the seas from China to Egypt. But the genius of Brahmans and Kshatriyas did not descend to the art of navigation; civilized India depended on the rude Arabians for commerce with the West; and the imperfect maritime communication which Hindus had with Sumatra, Java and China in the Buddhist period,—as we know from Fa Hian's pages, was soon forgotten and it was considered a sin to cross the seas. Hindu genius struggled against the dishonour cast on arts, Hindu architects and sculptors, and goldsmiths and weavers attained all that it was possible to attain by skill and industry and ingenuity and long training; but the genius which marks the literature and thought of ancient India is absent in her industrial arts, her mechanical inventions and her martime enterprise." *Civilization in Ancient India* pp. 560-61.

Foreign commerce in the hands of foreigners.

The sin of crossing the Black Sea.

It is needless to dilate on the evil from an economical point of view. Arts, industry and trade are, together with agriculture, the only means by which a nation can become rich, The example of the English people alone will suffice to illustrate it. It is her vast and limitless trade which has given to England the vast empire of India. Her ships traverse every sea; her merchants are to be found in every country; while her industry and arts have made her the workshop of the whole world. It is for these reason that England is one of the richest countries in the world. But in India arts and industry are despised as being unworthy of high caste men; while external trade is altogether forbidden at the pain of ex-communication, because it would involve the sin of crossing the "Black" Sea! Even agriculture which in the absence of arts and industry is the mainstay of India, is

Consequent poverty of the people.

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discouraged and left only to ignorant peasants, who being illiterate cannot avail themselves of those improved ways of scientific agriculture which alone can enable them to compete with the European agriculturists. While trade, industry, arts, and agriculture are thus despised and discouraged, our educated men naturally seek employments in Government and private service. Thus there is an ever increasing number of young men who instead of adding to the wealth of the nation, become mere consumers. What wonder then, if India labouring under these artificial discouragements, has become one of the poorest countries in the world? We need hardly say that so long as these caste prejudices are allowed to exist, India will never make a mark among the industrial and commercial nations of the world.

If we turn to the Vedas we shall find therein a healthy appreciation of all industries and arts in strange contrast to this morbid tendency of despising them in later Hinduism. Pandit Shiv Shankar Kavyatirtha in his *Jati Nirnaya* (Vid pp. 83-128) to which reference has already been made, discusses the question at length and has quoted verses from the Vedas bearing on a number of arts and industries, (including agriculture, spinning, weaving, architecture, well sinking, pottery, leather making, navigation, barber's craft, goldsmith's and blacksmith's craft, etc.,) showing the high estimation in which each of them was held by the Vedic Aryas. *Agriculture* as is well known, is almost a sacred institution in the Vedas. *Rig Veda X*, 26, 5-6 praises a *rishi* who keeps sheep and weaves woollen cloth out of their wool. *Atharva Veda* XIV, 1, 45 speaks of ladies of high position spinning yarn, weaving cloth, embroidering it furnishing it with laces and frills, and making a wedding gift of it to a newly married bride. We need not multiply refer-

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ences, but shall quote a single verse in which artists in general are praised.

श्रेष्ठं वः पेशो अधिधायि दर्शतं
स्तोमो वाजा ऋभवस्तं जुजुष्टन ।
धीरासो हिष्टा कवयो विपश्चितस्ताम्
व एना ब्राह्मणा वेदयामसि ॥

"O, wise and skilful artists, your excellent and beautiful art is known far and wide. You are patient, skilful and learned. These Brahmans praise you. Accept this praise."

§ 3. It has seriously checked National Progress.

Shudras denied all opportunities of advancement.

Under a system of hereditary caste only the privileged few have opportunites of intellectual and spiritual culture. Accordingly the Indian caste system has denied these opportunities to almost all the Shudra castes which form a major part of the nation. Under ordinary circumstances every man, whether high-born or low-born, has an opportunity of rising in the social scale according to his qualifications. It is a gross mistake to think that only those who are born in high families can become great men. The entire history of biography disproves this supposition. Mr. Smiles remarks in his "*Self Help*":—

Consequent paucity of great men in India.

Great men not restricted to one class or rank.

'Great men of science, literature and art,—apostles of great thoughts and lords of great hearts,—have belonged to no exclusive class nor rank in life. They have come alike from colleges, workshops, and farm-houses,—from the huts of poor men and the mansions of the rich. Some of God's greatest apostles have come from "the ranks." The poorest have sometimes taken the

Examples of great men who sprang from humble life in England.

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highest places. Take for instance, the remarkable fact that from the *barber's shop* came Jeremy Taylor, the most poetical of divines; Sir Richard Arkwright, the inventor of the spinning-jenny and founder of the cotton manufacture; Lord Tenterden, one of the most distinguished of Lord Chief Justices; and Turner, the greatest among the landscape painters.

Great Men who came from the Barber Class.

No one knows to a certainty what Shakespeare was; but it is unquestionable that he sprang from a humble rank. His father was a butcher and grazier, and Shakespeare himself is supposed to have been in early life a woolcomber."

The writer then goes on to give a very long list of some of England's greatest men who came from "the ranks." As most of our orthodox countrymen have a strange impression that a man can distinguish himself only in his ancestral profession, it will not be out of place to quote Mr. Smiles' list at some length.

"The common class of *day-labourers* has given us Brindley the engineer, Cook the navigator, and Burns the poet. *Masons and brick layers* can boast of Ben Johnson, who worked at the building of Lincoln's Inn, with a trowel in his hand and a book in his pocket; Edwards and Telford, the engineers; High Miller the geologist, and Allan Cunningham, the writer and sculptor; whilst among distinguished *carpenters* we find the names of Inigo Jones the architect, Harrison the chronometer-maker, John Hunter the physiologist, Romney and Opie the painters, Professor Lee, the Orientalist, and John Gibson, the sculptor. "From *the weaver class* have sprung Simson, the mathematician, Bacon, the sculptor, the two Milners, Adam Walker, John Foster,

Great men who came from the class of day-labourers.

Great men who came from the *weaver* class and from the shoemaker class.

Wilson, the ornithologist, Dr. Livingstone the missionary traveller, and Tameahil, the poet. *Shoemakers* have given us Sir Cloudesley Shovel, the great Admiral, (Sturgeon,) the electrician, Samauel Drew, the essayist, Gifford, the editor of the '*Quarterly Review*," Bloomfield, the poet, and William Carey, the missionary; whilst Morrison, another laborious missionary, was a maker of shoe-lasts. Within the last few years, a profound naturalist has been discovered in the person of a shoemaker at Banff, named Thomas Edwards, who, while maintaining himself by his trade, has devoted his leisure to the study of natural science in all its branches, his researches in connection with the smaller crustaceœ having been rewarded by the discovery of a new species, to which the name of "Praniza Edwardsii" has been given by naturalists.

Great men who came from the *tailor* class.

"Nor have *tailors* been undistinguished. John Stow, the historian worked at the trade during some part of his life. Jackson, the painter, made clothes until he reached mandood. The brave Sir John Hawkswood, who so greatly distinguished himself at Poietiers, and was knighted by Edward III for his valour, was in early life apprenticed to a London tailor. Admiral Hobson, who broke the boom at Vigo in 1702, belonged to the same calling.... But the greatest tailor of all is unquestionably Andrew Johnson, the preset President of the United States—a man of extraordinary force of character and vigour of intellect. In his great speech at Washington, when describing himself as having begun his political career as an elderman and run through all the branches of the legislature, a voice in the crowd cried "From a tailor up." It was characteristic of Johnson to take the intended sarcasm in good part, and even to turn it to account. "Some gentleman says, I have been a tailor. That does not disconcert me in the least; for

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when I was a tailor I had the reputation of being a good one, and making close fits; I was always punctual with my customers, and always did good work."

"Cardinal Wolsey, De Fœ, Akenside and Kirke White were the sons of *butchers;* Bunyan was a *tinker*, and Joseph Lancaster a *basketmaker*. Among the great names identified with the invention of the steam-engine are those of Newcomen, Watt and Stephenson; the first a blacksmith, the second a maker of mathematical instruments, and the third an engine fire-man. Among those who have given the greatest impulse to the sublime science of astronomy, we find Copernicus, the son of a Polish baker; Kepler, the son of a German public-house-keeper, and himself the "gacronde cabaret;" D' Alembert, a foundling picked up one winter's night on the steps of the Church of St. Jean le Rond at Paris, and brought up by the wife of a glazier; and Newton and Laplace, the one the son of a small freeholder near Grantham, the other the son of a poor peasant of Beaumont-en-Auge, near Honfleur............"

Great men who come from some other "low" classes.

Mr. Smiles then refers to some illustrious men of other European countries who were likewise of humble origin. He says:—

"Foreign not less than English biography abounds in illustrations of men who have glorified the lot of poverty by their labours and their genius. In art we find, Claude, son of a pastry cook; Greefs, of a baker; Leopold Robert, of a watch-maker; and Haydn of a wheel wright, whilst Daguerre was a scene-painter at the Opera. The father of Gregory VII was a carpenter, of Sextus V., a shepherd; and of Adrain VI, a poor bargeman............ Of like humble origin were Hauy, the mineralogist who was the son of a weaver of Saint-Just; Haute-feuille,

Similar Examples from other European countries.

the mechanician of a baker at Orleans; Joseph Fourier, the mathematician of a tailor at Auxerre; Duirand the architect, of a Paris shoe maker; and Gesner, the naturalist, of a skinner or worker in hides at Zurich............The chemist Vanquelin was the son of a peasant of Saint Andre-d' Herbetot, in the Calvados."

What do the above examples. teach us?

These examples are enough to show that a man of humble birth may win renown and distinction by application, energy and industry, and that a man's heriditary profession is not necessarily the only calling in which be can shine. We do not mean to profess a disbelief in the *principle of heredity* or to deny the obvious fact that men of high birth have better opporitnnities of achievving greatness; but that such opporitunities are only too often thrown away, is evident from the history of every country. It has especially been the case in India, where the system of hereditary castes by reserving peculiar privileges for the higher class has taken away the only incentive for industry, and by thus softening the struggle for supremacy, (the only condition of continued progress), has paved the way for national degeneracy. This is the chief cause of the pre ent miserable state of the Brahmans.

While high-born men have thus thrown away the chances which their birth gave them of winning greatness, others who were less fortunate in their birth and circumstances have often raised themselves by sheer dint of labour and perseverance. This is amply shown by the rather lengthy list of some of the self-raised men, which we have already quoted from Smiles. Sir Arthur Helps very aptly remarks: "*Deduct* all that men of humbler classes have done for England in the way of inventions only, and see where she would have been but

for them." Indeed as Mr. Smiles observes: "The instances of men in this and other countries who, by dint of persevering application and energy, have raised themselves from the humblest ranks of industry to eminent positions of usefulness and influence in society, are indeed so numerous that they have long ceased to be regarded as exceptional."

That this is not the case with India is due chiefly to the caste system. Or, shall we say that the soil of India is not congenial for producing men who would achieve greatness in spite of their humble birth? The contrary of this is proved by the history of our own country in ancient times when, as in modern Europe, many men who could not boast of high birth obtained undying renown and distinction by their abilities and virtue. But in modern India the fate of a man who happens to be born in a low caste is sealed for ever. He cannot rise in society, no matter howsoever learned, virtuous, industrious or intelligent he might be. Let us only think of any of these self-raised men of Europe—of Cardinal Wolsey, for example, who from the son of a butcher rose to the highest power and position in his country, and let us at the same time picture to our minds the hopelessly wretched state of our own country, and we can form some idea of the enormity of injustice and social tyranny to which the poor "Shudras" of India are subjected! This is the only reason why almost all the great men which India has produced during the last twenty centuries (of which we have a tolerably reliable history) have come from the ranks of Brahmans and Kshatriyas. The vast population of Shudras has hardly any honoured names to show during this long period,* if we only except Kabir, Dadu and some others who belonged to sects that had broken

State of low caste men in modern India.

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*This is rather incorrect as regards South India

through the artificial restraints of caste. How many geniuses, that under more favourable circumstances might have done immense good to their country and religion, are thus forced to live an obscure life and die an obscure death for mere want of opportunities. What can be more unjust, more wicked, and more unnatural than that a man should be prevented from developing those powers which God has given him? And what institution can be more monstrous and more pernicious in its effect than this one which puts hindrances in the progress of man instead of helping him on his onward march?

Caste—the reason of paucity of great men among Shudras.

Its blighting effect on national development.

While the "low-born" Shudras are thus artificially kept down, the "high-born" Brahmans, secure of the privileges which their birth gives them, generally abstain from all exertion, and have through lapse of time, degenerated as a class into mere idlers. No wonder then, if the number of really great men is so miserably small in this vast country! Thus India suffers from the double evil of unjust tyranny perpetrated over the Shudras and undue supremacy given to the Brahmans.

Its pernicious effect on Brahmans themselves.

§ 4.—Social tyranny over the Shudras and its effect on Hinduism.

The reader must have already formed some idea of the social tyranny which is even now exercised over the Shudras. But if we turn to the history of the Puranic times, when the caste system possessed all the vigour of its youth, the sanctity of religion and authority of law, we are simply shocked to notice that the most unjust

Condition of Shudras in mediæval India.

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and monstrous laws were framed for keeping down the Shudras. There was a separate law for each caste. The Brahman was treated with undue leniency and the Shudra with undue severity and cruelty. "If one strikes one of a superior caste he should be mutilated; if he abuses such a person, his tongue should be cut out; if he pretends to instruct such a person hot oil should be dropped into his mouth." *Vishnu Smriti*, V. 19, 23 and 24). "If one who should not be touched defiles* a twice-born man by touching him, he should be put to death." (*Vishnu* V, 104, quoted by Mr. Dutt, p. 697). If a man slew a Brahman, he was punished with death and the confiscation of his property. If such a man slew a man of equal or lower caste, other graduated punishments were meted out to him. A fine of a thousand coins was the punishment for slaying a Kshatriya, that of a hundred for killing a Vaishya, and that of ten coins only for slaying a Shudra! (*Bauddhayana* I., 10, 18, 19, quoted by Mr. Dutt, p. 248). Adultery was punished according to the caste of the woman dishonoured; and *Yajnyavalka* lays down the inequitous law that adultery with a woman of a lower caste is not punishable! (II. 291, quoted by Mr. Dutt, p. 697). Such laws will naturally excite a feeling of righteous indignation in every unbiassed mind. Happily they have now deservedly become a dead letter. But the position of the Shudras is still far from being

Unjust laws in medieval Smritis

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*In his *Census of India Report* p. 540, Sir Herbert Risley, Census Commissioner, gives instances showing how far this idea of pollution by the proximity of Shudras has been developed in some parts of India. Says he: "Thus the table of social precedence attached to the Cochin report shows that while a Nayar can pollute a man of a higher caste only by touching him, people of the Kammalan, including masons, blacksmiths, carpenters, and workers in leather, pollute at a distance of 24 ft., toddy drawers (Iluvan or Tiyan) at 30 ft while in the case of Paraiyan Pariahs. who eat beef, the range of pollution is stated to be no less than 64 ft."

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satisfactory. He is still the victim of much social tyranny. As we have shown before, (see sec. 3), he can hardly have any opportunity of improving his social position. Nay, spiritual comfort and religious consolation, which are the chief advantages of religion, are also denied to him. He cannot study the Vedas, nor can he himself perform religious observances.

Present condition of Shudras

Being thus despised in the society in which they live, the Shudras have naturally been always ready to renounce the religion which has so unjustly barred them from every sort of progress. Whenever a new religion has sprung up or a foreign religion introduced into this country, they have gladly seized the opportunity to improve their position by a change of religion and to cast off the chains in which their ungenerous co-religionists long kept them. The remarks of Mr. Dutt on this subject are so judicious that we shall quote them at length.

Their religious disabilities

and consequent readiness to desert Hinduism.

Weakness of Hinduism against rival religions.

Having raised the question, How could Buddhism make so rapid a progress in a conservative country like India, he goes on to say:—

"Stories like those of Upali and Sunita, which we have narrated before suggest an explanation. Upali was a barber and Sunita was a sweeper, and both were probably Shudras. Hinduism had no room for such as they, however meritorious, however virtuous, however learned they might be. Upali and Sunita adopted Buddhism, and they rose to honor, to fame, to priesthood. This is the weakness of Hinduism; it is a weakness which it has inherited from historic causes, and for which it has paid dearly from time to time." (*Civilisation in Ancient India*, Vol. II, p. 304.)

Mr. Dutt on the spread of Buddhism.

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The learned writer then enters into a detailed history of this exclusiveness of Indian castes. When the Aryas first came to this land, they found it inhabited by the non-Aryan aborigines among whom they appeared as a conquering and civilising race. At first they had to wage a long war with these aborigines. But times changed and the millions of aborigines at last submitted hemselves to the Aryans. We have seen that the old system of Varnas was altogether different from the hereditary caste system of to-day, and that accordingly many Shudras, *i. e.*, non-Aryans, became not only Brahmans, but Rishis. At last the hereditary castes came into existence and the Shudras were now practically shut out from the inner pale of Hindu society. But the number of the Shudras who were anxious to be admitted into the pale of Vedic religion was still very large. Most of them were in every way worthy members of society.

Social and religious tyranny over the Sudras—its principal cause.

"They adopted the civilization of their conquerors, adopted their religion as far as they were allowed to do, engaged themselves in peaceful industry and trades, acquired riches and wealth, owned villages, and even in some instances acquired the religious knowledge of their masters, (*Chhandogya Upanishad* IV, 2). The time had come when the Shudras might be formally admitted within the pale of Hinduism, and allowed to learn the Hindu Vedas, practise Hindu rites and employ Hindu priests. Such a wise concession would have strengthened Hinduism for ever after, and saved it from manifold calamities and disasters. But this was not to be. The Aryan castes were exclusive, and they rigorously kept the Shudras out. They prohibited him from all religious knowledge and all religious rites, they made unjust and cruel civil and criminal laws against him, and they continued to treat him as an outcast and a slave long after he had

acquired wealth and civilization and power. Such cruelty brought on its retribution.

"Millions of intelligent, virtuous and influential Shudras sighed for a recognised status in the religious system of India. The time came, and the man;—a scion of a respected Kshatriya house descended from his status, and proclaimed that virtue, not caste, led to honour.

"Thousands at once came over and joined Gautama Buddha, and Buddhism rapidly became a power in the land. Two centuries after Buddha the Maurya dynasty became the master of Northern India. They were not Kshatriyas and were therefore looked down upon by adherents of caste. What wonder that the great Ashoka made a clean sweep of caste, and adopted the religion which honoured virtue and meritorious acts rather than caste." (*Ibid*).

Decay of Buddhism: its chief cause.

In this way the religion of Buddha rapidly spread from one end of the country to the other. But however excellent as a code of morality, Buddhism as a religion contained a weakness which soon brought about its fall in India. At first it was little more than a protest against the invidious distinction of castes and other abuses of Indian society; as such it appealed to the hearts of all reasonable men and thus easily gained many coverts. But later on it assumed the character of a distinct religion. In this latter respect; being atheistic and agnostic in its teaching, it was hardly attractive at least for an eminently religious people like the Indians. Consequently it disappeared even more rapidly than it had spread, yielding place to what may be called the "Puranic or Modern Hinduism," a strange medley of Non-Aryan fetishism, Buddhist idolatory, and Vedic ritual.

Revival of Hinduism.

Puranic Hinduism.

With the restoration of Hinduism, though in a much altered form, the old problem 'how to deal with the Shudras' reappeared. "An opportunity now presented itself in the 8th to 10th century after Christ, (as it had come once before in the 8th to 10th century before Christ), to deal with the Shudras in a catholic and kindly spirit, and to admit them to the benefits of the same common religion and the same common observances. Other nations in the world,—among whom caste is unknown,—have done so. The Greeks and their Helot slaves have mingled and formed the modern Greek nation. The Normans have mixed with the Saxons in England, and the Franks have mixed with the Celts in France. Even the haughty barons of medieval Europe have mixed with their coloni and slaves, and formed the modern nations of Europe. Racial distinctions and political distinctions disappear one after another,—but caste distinctions never!

Revival of caste: its further development.

"The opportunity was lost. The Shudra castes were not admitted within the pale of Hinduism. Once more they were cruelly debarred from the blessing of religious instructions and rites. Aryan priests would not officiate for them and they had to appoint Brahmans of their own castes, (the Varna Brahmans of modern India) to perform for them religious rites.

Shudra still kept out.

"More than this,—the Aryan Vaishya caste was now permanently disunited into profession-castes,—the Kayasthas, the Vaidyas, the goldsmiths, the potters, the weavers, and the others. They were disinherited of their ancient privilege of religious knowledge and the study of the Veda, which now became the monopoly of Brahmans. And the Brahmans performed religious rites for

Disintegration of Vaishya community.

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these Aryan castes who had formerly the privilege of performing those rites themselves.

Evil consequences of revival of caste.

"Thus there was a double injustice done,—an injustice to the sections of the ancient Vaishya caste who were disinherited of religious learning,—and an injustice to the Shudra castes who were still left outside the pale of Hindu religion. The injustice once again brought its own retribution.

Spread of Mohammedanism.

"Fifty millions of the population of India, formerly belonging to the untutored and uncared-for Shudra castes have fallen off from the precincts of Hinduism and have embraced the faith of Islam. India of to-day is a house divided against it self." (*Ibid.*)

Social injustice to the Shudras—its chief cause.

Mr. Dutt then goes on to say that the primary objec of Mohammedan conquerors and rulers of India, was to build up an empire, and extend their dominion, and not to spread their religion. It is true that history records many acts of intolerence and persecution; nevertheless by far a large majority of conversions were due to a recognised social status which even a lowborn Shudra could acquire by becoming a Mohammedan. This is the chief reason why most of the converts came from the Shudra class. Mr. Dutt cites an example which is quite to the point. "Of all the provinces of Northern India," says he, "Bengal proper contained the smallest proportion of Aryan population. And of the fifty millions of Indian Mussalmans, the Bengal Mussalmans number nearly twenty millions." (Ibid, p. 434).

Example of Bengal converts.

Similar danger in future.

But it would be a fatal mistake to suppose that this danger from which Hinduism has so seriously suffered more than once in its

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past history is now over. Nay it would be no exaggeration to say that this very danger is now threatening it with ten-fold gravity. Mohammedanism is as ready as ever to win over the despised Shudras and to give them a status and position. Only about 10 years ago the Shanars* of the Madras presidency embraced Mohammedanism in thousands, because the Brahmans would not allow them to enter Hindu temples and compelled them to worship outside. Buddhism which once seemed to have disappeared for good from India, is putting forth fresh efforts to win back the land of its birth. While a new rival to Hinduism —much more formidable than either of these,--has appeared on the scene. Christianity backed by all the great nations of Europe, supported by all the pomp and magnificence of Western civilisation, rich with the whole literature and philosophy of the Europe and America of the twentieth century, and above all holding out hopes of the highest social dvancement to men of even lowest and humblest birth,—Christianity with all these advantages will certainly prove a more formidable adversary to modern Hinduism, with its weak and feeble adherents, its endless superstitions, its meaningless rituals, its good-for-nothing literature of the Puranas its narrow-minded, unjust, and unnatural caste system,—than either Buddhism or Mohammedanism had ever been.

Present situation.

Hinduism and Christianity.

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*While speaking of these wholesale conversions of Shanars, Sir Herbert Risley remarks : " It is conceivable that other castes in other parts of India, will some day realise that for the low-born Hindu the shortest road to success in life, whether at the bar or in the public service, may lie through the portals of Islam " (*The people of India* p. 239). It rests with the leaders of Hindu community to falsify this conjecture.

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This weakness of Hinduism the chief strength of Christianity.

It is natural for men to seek to improve their position, and it requires no prophet to foretell that unless we are prepared to give to every man that status which he deserves by his merits, millions of Shudras will, in the near future, become Christians, as millions of them become Budhists and Mohammedans in the past. Let the Hindus, therefore, be warned in time and accord a more tolerant and just treatment to their "low-caste" countrymen. Numberless Shudras still hanker after admission into the inner circle of Hinduism.* They all follow useful occupations and with the exception of one or two castes, (such as sweepers,) there is nothing in their pursuits which deserves our contempt. In short they are, in every respect, worthy members of society. But still they are excluded not only from opportunities of worldly prosperity, but also from spritual knowledge and religious observances. The Christian missionaries are not slow to see this weakness of Hinduism. Nay, there is ample evidence to show that they are making the most of their adversary's weakness. Some of our countrymen are labouring under a delusion that the progress of Christianity in India has now been effectually arrested. This is a mistake. The Census Report for 1901 shows that during the last 30 years the number of its followers in India has doubled, *i. e.*, from 1,506,098 in 1872, it rose to 2,923,241 in 1901. (vide *Census of India Report* vol. I, p. 388). Being comparatively uusuccessful in their efforts to convert men of high caste, the missionaries are now directing their attention chiefly to the conversion of low-caste men. Indeed it must be clear

*This has led several of the so-called Shudra castes to claim a descent from Kshatriyas or Brahmans. Needless endeavour ! for nobody should be a 'Shudra' or a 'twice-born' except by his own personal merits.

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to every one who has eyes to see and ears to hear tha Christianity is gaining more converts by this weaknes of Hinduism, than by its own innate strength. Wha wonder that if an appeal be made to Shudras to turn elsewhere for religious comfort and social position, they will respond to the appeal as they have done more than once in past times. Indeed, the wonder is not why so many Shudras have fallen off from Hinduism, but why so many of them still remain attached to it. There is no other religion on the face of the earth which thus degrades and keeps down the great body of its adherents. "To the poorest and humblest of Buddhists, like Upali and Sunita the path was opened to virtuous conduct and the acquisition of learning, to honour, to distinction, and to priesthood. The poorest Christian peasant or labourer is the inheritor of all the beautiful moral precepts, all the rich consolations which that noble religion can afford to the highest princess and potentates of Europe. He is entitled to the ministration of the highest priest in the land, and in the eye of religion, he is equal to all other Christians. The humblest Mohammedan cultivator in the remotest corner of Bengal considers himself a member of a great confederation; he is proud of the traditions of Mahomet and of Arab conquests and civilization; he listens to the teachings of distinguished *Moulvies* and *Moulanas* who visit Eastern Bengal from distant parts of Iudia; he looks towards Mecca five times in the day! and utters the same prayer which is fixed for all Musalmans; and if he can put by some money, he undertakes a visit to that holy place. His place is assured in the great Mohammedan community, and in the eye of religion he is not inferior

Other religions free from this weakness.

Religious equality in Buddhism

In Christianity.

I- Mohammedanism.

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to the Sultan of Turkey or the Khedive of Egypt." (Dutt's *Ancient India*, Vol. II, pp. 311-312).

Claims of the Shudras on Hindus in general.

And there is no reason why after all we should be so hard upon the poor Shudras. For many centuries they have lived by our side and fought by our side; they have always shared in our weal or woe; they are proud of the same ancestors as we are, and glory in possessing the same literature as we do. They cherish the same religious beliefs and aspirations, and they are, as a rule, more orthodox Hindus than even the so-called high caste-men. Let us therefore be just to them, or the knell of Hinduism will have soon sounded.

§ 5.—Undue Leniency to the Brahmans and its Deteriorating Effects on their Character.

Undue privileges to Brahmans in medieval India.

While the caste system has been so unjust in keeping down the Shudras, it has been equally unjust in giving undue privileges to the Brahmans. This was especially the case in medieval India when, as we have remarked before, there was a separate law for each caste. The highest reverence was shown to the Brahman, *irrespective of his personal merits*. His person was sacred and inviolable; nobody could lay hands upon him. He could not be punished with death even for the most heinous crimes. The highest punishment for him was banishment. And above all he enjoyed the monopoly of learning and religious rites. Happily this state of things has passed away. But it has left a most pernicious effect on the character of the Brahmans. *As a class*,—(of course there are many honourable exceptions),—they have become grasping, avaricious, indolent, and narrow-minded. As Mr. Dutt remarks, "monopoly is injurious to those who hold it as well as to those who are excluded

Its pernicious effects.

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from it. And monopoly of learning is the worst sort of monopoly which mankind has ever known." Indeed nothing strikes us so much in the present state of Hindu society as the degeneracy of the once illustrious Brahmanical community. The sons of those learned sages who wrote the brightest chapter in the history of early civilization, and to whom the world owes the first beginning of many sciences, have by a curious irony of fate become all but illiterate. The descendants of those venerable Rishis whose progressive spirit made India the pride and glory of the ancient world have now strangely enough become the greatest opponents of all reform and progress. *It is a most fatal mistake to think that the Brahmans have profitted by the caste system.* The fact is just the reverse. The system has been as injurious to the Brahmans as to any other caste. Indeed it would be difficult to point out any community in India, he Shudras alone excepted, which has suffered more from this institution than the Brahmans themselves. Let our torthodox Brahmans, therefore, be undeceived of the delusion under which they have been long labouring, that the caste system is beneficial to them. And let them remember that their best friends are those who try to destroy this institution rather than those whose business is to flatter their vanity by advocating it with all the sophistry at their command.

Lamentable state of Brahman community.

Caste system as injurious to Brahmans as to Shudras.

§ 6.—WANT OF NATIONAL UNITY AMONG THE HINDUS.

Another serious evil caused by this institution is that it has wrecked social and national union in the country by interdicting marriage and social intercourse among the various sections of the people. It has cut up the Hindu nation

Exclusiveness of castes.

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into numberless sub-divisions and has hopelessly isolated them from each other. "An analysis of the table," says Sir Herbert Risley, in his *Census Report*, "shows that it includes 2,378 main castes and tribes, and 43 races or nationalities" (*Census of India Report*, p. 537.) Each caste down to the lowest is eaten up with self-admiration and conceit, and looks upon others very much as aliens or strangers. This is the chief reason why there is hardly any feeling of nationality among the Hindus. An average Hindu feels little or no concern with any but his own caste-men. His interests, his sympathies, and even his patriotism and philanthropy are confined within the extremely narrow circle of his own caste. National unity is impossible where such narrow-minded caste prejudices exist. This is a most serious evil. Mr. Dutta aptly remarks: "The caste sytem in India has much to answer for; but its worst and most lamentable result is this permanent breach and disunion where there should have been fusion and union, this weakness and death where there should have been national strength and life." (*Civilization in Ancient India*, p. 684)

Its effects.

§ 7.—EXTREME CONSERVATISM OF THE PEOPLE.

The only evil in passing to which from the last mentioned one we shall not be guilty of an anti-climax, is the permanent conservatism which this institution has established in India. It has produced and perpetuated a sort of social tyranny which leaves no room for the play of individuality. J. S. Mill remarks: "Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it be called." This social despotism by destroying the free conscience of the people has made reform among the Hindus almost an

Caste—a system of social despotism.

Its evil effects.

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impossibility. If a man of enlightened views wants to marry his daughter at an adult age he is threatened with ex-communication. If a man who knows the miserable state of Indian widows, countenances by word or deed their re-marriage, he is threatened with ex-communication. If a young man of high ambition wishes to cross the sea and go to England for education he is threatened with ex-communication. There is no reform, whether religious or social or commercial, which is not thus hindered and hampered. In this way the caste system in India has become the stronghold of all evil customs and the bulwark of all superstitions. It is in this sense that it may be said to be not only a great evil in itself but the cause of almost all evils, which have crept into the Hindu society. This is the chief reason why the Hindus of to-day are socially the most conservative, unprogressive, and stationery people in the world.

Difficulties in the way of reform.

Extreme conservatism of Hindus

§ 8.—Caste an Evil from a Religious Point of View.

Hitherto we have spoken chiefly of the social evils of this institutions. "But," says Keshab Chandra Sen in an *Appeal to Young India:* ' few seem to think that it is not so much as a social but as a religious institution that it has become the great scourge it really is. As a system of absurd social distinctions, it is certainly pernicious. But when we view it on moral grounds it appears as a scandal to conscience, and an insult to humanity, and all our moral ideas and sentiments rise to execrate it, and to demand its immediate extermination. Caste is the bulwark of Hindu idolatry and the safeguard of Brahminical priesthood. It is an audacious and sacrilegious violation of God's law of human brother-hood. It makes

Keshab Chandra Sen's opinion.

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civil distinctions inviolable, divine institutions, and in the name of the Holy God sows perpetual discord and enmity among his children! It exalts one section of the people above the rest, gives the former under the seal of divine sanction the monopoly of education, religion and all the advantages of social pre-eminence, and visits them with the arbitrary authority of exercising a tyrannicnl sway over unfortunate and helpless millions of human souls, trampling them under their feet and holding them in a state of miserable servitude. It sets up the Brahminical order as the very vicegerents of the Diety, and stamps the mass of the population as a degraded and unclean race, unworthy of manhood, and unfit for heaven."

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Chapter IV.

Some Suggestions To Remedy The Evils Of Caste System.

It will be asked: "Admitting that the system of caste has been very injurious to India, what is the practical way of abolishing it?" The question is easier put than answered. But this essay would be guilty of an inexcusably serious omission, if it did not venture to make some suggestions on this important though difficult point. The reader should, however, note that we do so with a full consciousness of our inability to grapple with this difficult problem, and with the hope that our reformers will take it up and bestow upon it that serious attention which it deserves.

§ 1.—SUDDEN ABOLITION NEITHER POSSIBLE NOR ADVISABLE.

Failure of the experiment by Brahmo Samaj.

We are not of opinion that a sudden and hasty abandonment of caste distinctions will remedy the evil. The experiment was tried by the Brahmo Samaj, and it failed. Fired with a noble indignation against this pernicious institution, some extreme Brahmos tried to break the chains of caste at one blow. Perhaps they thought that in doing so they were setting an example of practical reform which would soon be followed throughout the country, and that their nation would soon stand freed from the trammels which have fettered them for many centuries. But they had miscalculated the strength of those caste prejudices which they were trying to combat. Instead of being followed by the whole nation they soon found themselves in the awkward position of an isolated

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sect, or—what in Hindu society means the same thing,—a new *caste*. Let us not be slow to learn the lesson which this incident can teach us, *viz*, that *a complete and total disregard of all our countrymen's caste prejudices, would only result in the creation of a new caste*, and would thus increase the evil instead of remedying it. We do not mean to say that we should respect all the petty scruples and prejudices of our orthodox countrymen. Fortunately these prejudices are fast slackening by a variety of causes, and we should certainly help their destruction. All that is meant is that *our reforms should be gradual*, and not sudden and hasty.

Similar views of some Arya Samajists.

Some earnest and enthusiastic members of the Arya Samaj also once advocated the immediate renunciation of caste and the formation of an Arya fraternity among its own members. The subject engaged the serious attention of the Panjab Arya Samajes for some time. The *Arya Bhratri Sabha* (now a defunct body) represented this school of thought. But wiser counsels prevailed, and the Arya Samajists, as a body, disapproved of the idea of thus isolating themselves.

§ 2:—Enlightenment of the Masses.

Educating public opinion.

Perhaps the safest and surest way of meeting the difficulty is to *teach the masses a correct view of the matter, i. e.*, to inspire the *Shudra* with a sense of manly self-respect, and to tell the *Brahman* that his birth alone can give him no real superiority, and that even the "low-born" men are his fellow-men and worthy of his respect; in short to popularise the evils of the caste system. *The nation's mind must be changed before its institutions can be changed.* A free-minded and enlightened people will have free and healthy institutions, while a low-minded

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and superstitious people will be fettered by unwholesome institutions. As Mr. Dutt observes: "Priestly supremacy and royal despotism are inevitable when the people become enervated, and are feeble and incapable of taking care of their consciences or their political rights...Such chains are received ungrudgingly by a feeble and lifeless people; when the people awake to life and vigour, the chains fall asunder." (*Civilisation in Ancient India*, pp. 165-96. But how to achieve this end? Much is being done in this direction by ***Education***,

Western Education.

But Education, it must be admitted, has only touched the surface of our society. Nor will it ever do more than this, so long as a foreign tongue remains the only medium of high and liberal education. What is required is ***mass education***,—the uplifting of the moral and intellectual level of the whole nation,—which must ever remain a dream until education is imparted chiefly through the vernacular. Much more therefore depends upon *indegenous reform* which alone can reach the masses, and penetrate the inner and deeper strata of Hindu society. The various Reform Societies which are to be found in all parts of India have a very onerous duty imposed upon them in this respect. We shall speak of some of them in detail.

Indegenous reform.

§ 3.—Duties of Reform Societies.

1. Arya Samaj.

The *Arya Samaj* stands conspicuous among all societies that aim at the renovation of the Hindus. It has declared a crusade against all superstitions and all evil customs. Taking for its model ancient India rather than modern Europe, appeal to the Vedas rather than to unaided reason, to the great Rishis of yore rather than to foreign scholars, it

Its influence in Northern India.

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has spread its influence far and wide. Its light has penetrated the innermost depths of the Hindu society. In Upper India at least, its preachers have carried the torch of Vedic light even among illiterate people among whom not a ray of western civilization has reached or will reach for a long time to come. True, as yet it has not been able to do much in the way of practically carrying out the reform which forms the subject of this essay. Neverthless, it is educating the public opinion on the subject, which, as we have remarked above, is a necessary preparation for introducing such a radical reform. But though its policy of reform is sound and excellent, the success hitherto achieved by the Arya Samaj is very small considering the greatness of the task before it. Hitherto its reform has been practically confined to Upper India. It has hardly found its way into Bengal, and the Madras and Bombay Presidencies. It will tax all the energy of the Arya Samaj to root out superstition from the whole of India. In this essay of course we are concerned only with *caste*.

Its duty.

Before the Arya Samaj can be said to have fairly discharged its duty in respect of popularising this reform, it should exhibit much more activity in preaching its evils, and, what is still more important, should produce a better literature on the subject. The widest publicity should be given to the fact that the caste did not prevail among the ancient Aryas, and is not sanctioned by the Vedas. This will go a long way in slackening those prejudices which our conservative countrymen cherish in favour of this institutions on the score of its supposed antiquity. The Vedas are still revered by the Hindus as the highest authority in all religious matter, and when the Hindus are fully convinced that they do not sanction the caste system, they will perhaps not have much scruple in throwing away

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the shackles which they have long put on cheerfully as God-sent ornaments. Happily this is a subject on which even European scholars are unanimously in favour of its doctrine, and it is thus possible for us to convince even those who would not be convinced in such matters by anybody except a Max Muller or a Roth.

Purification of low castes by the Panjab Arya Samajes.

Since the above was first written (in the first edition in 1900) the Arya Samaj has taken the bold step of reclaiming men who were considered very low in the scales of castes. This is a practical work of the highest importance, and the credit for this move belongs to the Panjab Arya Samajes which have purified several thousands of Ods, Meghs, Rahtiyas, &c. It will, however, not be enough to merely "purify" these men by making them undergo a particular ceremony, though it serves the useful purpose of securing for them a social recognition which they did not possess. What is equally necessary is to make suitable arrangements for uplifting their moral and intellectual condition. We understand that the Panjab Arya Pratinidhi Sabhas are taking practical steps to achieve this object.

Reclamation of Rajput converts to Mahommedanism in U. P

Within a year or so several hundreds of Rajputs whose ancestors had been converted to Mohammedanism, have been reclaimed in Etawa, Cawnpore, and other districts of the United Provinces under the auspices of the Kshatriya Mahasabha, and admitted into their respective castes. This is another practical work of the highest importance the credit for which is due mainly to the Arya Samaj.

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2. The *Brahmo Samaj* has perhaps ceased to be a living power in India. In its early career, however, it carried on a noble warfare against *caste*, though it met with little success on account of its immoderate policy. The Brahmos will now see that success is possible only by more moderate means. Let them make common cause with the Aryas against the common foe and help on the noble work which both have at heart.

2. Brahmo Samaj.

Its immoderate policy and failure.

Another society which we shall mention in this connection is the *Theosophical Society*. We might expect that the society whose motto is *universal brotherhood* will do all that it can to eradicate the caste prejudices in India. But unfortunately such is not the case. Ever since the rupture with the Arya Samaj,—(1881 A. C.),—the society has shown a tendency to make friends with the orthodox Hindus even though it be at some sacrifice of its cherished principles. It is not a little painful to see many learned theosophists flatter even the worst prejudices of the Hindus, attempt an "occult" or "esoteric" explanation of even their worst superstitions, and generally applaud that degenerated system which is mainly responsible for the present downfall of the Hindus. This becomes all the more objectionable when we see that they have not a word to say against the many evils which are eating into the vitals of Hindu society,—aye not even against the caste system which is diametrically

3. Theosophical Society.

Its present policy of flattering Hindu vanity.

* The Theosophical Society began its career in India under the teachership of Swami Dayananda Saraswati. In 1880, however, the Swami discovered that the founders of the Society did not agree with him in his views about God. He therefore severed his connection with the Society in 1881.

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opposed to the principle of 'Universal Brotherhood.' That a society whose vaunted mission is to preach brotherhood of all mankind, should be supremely indifferent to the question of hereditary castes in India, is, to say the least of it, in the highest degree strange. This attitude of the society towards caste might be accidental. But an ordinary mortal would naturally think that it is due to an undue regard for the feelings of the orthodox Hindus. And we may remark that such was not the case in the early days of the society. In the preface to Colonel Olcott's Address delivered at the Framji Cawasji Hall at Bombay on March 23rd, 1879, we read:

Its previous policy very different.

"Thus India's interest and the interest of the Theosophical Society are one. But the first step in the onward march is to realize the brotherhood in India. Before the nation can become great, its proud must become humble; and when the Brahmins flinging away with disdain all caste distinctions shall shake hands with the Mahar and embrace him with all the cordiality of a brother, that will be an achievement of which the Theosphical Society will really be proud; and that will be the day which will mark the beginning of India's greatness, making of India a nation in the true sense of the word, giving it one united people.' We could multiply quotations, were it not for want of space at our disposal. But it would be difficult to find a single passage containing such a bold denunciation of caste in the recent literature of the society,—though it has multiplied hundred-fold since 1879,—as is found in these words of its late-lamented and venerable President-Founder. Let us, however, hope that the society will show itself more worthy of its great motto, and will raise its potent voice against the system of hereditary castes

Duty of Indian Theosophists.

than which there can be nothing more hostile to the doctrine of "Universal Brotherhood." Let us hope that the Indian Theosophists will look to the true needs of India and speak boldly in defence of their most deeply cherished principles, even though in doing so they hurt the over-sensitive feelings of the caste-ridden Hindus

Caste conferences.

Caste conferences and caste associations stand in a peculiar relation to the question of *caste*. While declaring the social *reform* of the Hindus to be their chief aim they yet base their *modus operandi* on the distinction of hereditary castes which *deforms* the Hindu Society more than anything else. The subject is so intimately connected with the modern caste system that we shall devote a separate section to it.

§ 4:—Caste Conferences.

Their growing power.

Of late the desire to reform the social abuses of Hindu Society has taken the shape of establishing caste associations for the purpose. The idea of herditary castes is so deeply rooted in the Hindu mind that it is no wonder that the system has grown very rapidly and we now have not only local caste associations, but also provincial conferences. The *Kayastha* Conference was the first of its sort, but its example was soon followed by others, and conferences with similar object and scope began to spring up like mush-rooms all over the country, till we now have more than a dozen of them. Even numerically small sub-castes have formed themselves into conferences.

Its possible consequences.

What will be the result of all this? One result is evident. The caste prejudices of the Hindus which were slackening under the whole. some influence of the Samajic preaching and

western education, will receive fresh strength, though for a time only; the fast decaying narrow walls which have hitherto kept the Hindus disunited into numberless petty divisions, will gain renewed support; the feeling of nationality which is only sprouting in the long-subjected Hindu mind under the English rule, will be seriously crippled; and the work of social and national unity will be pushed back to half a century. We do not mean to speak disparagingly of the well-meaning leaders of these social movements. We admit that most of them are guided by the best motives, being men of unselfish and patriotic feelings. We are prepared also to admit that these conferences have put some check on the extravagance of the Hindus, and helped in popularising some of those social reforms, (*e. g.*, female education, adult marriage, &c.,) which were inaugurated by the Arya Samaj. But all these reforms put together will not make up for half the mischief which these movements will have done, if they strengthen the caste prejudices. That this is an actual danger is evidently shown by the narrow and sectarian spirit which these societies are already infusing (perhaps unconsciously) into the minds of their members. Nothing can be more discouraging than to see even learned and enlightened men confine their sympathies chiefly to their own caste-men, and thus relapse into that sectarianism from which it should be the object of every reform society to wean them. This is hardly surprising when we remember the constitution of the societies in which they have to work. Being founded on caste they naturally foster that sectarian spirit which is the very essence of *caste*. For an average Hindu long accustomed to recognise caste, it is impossible not to catch the contagion

Strengthening of caste prejudices.

A manifest danger.

Revival of sectarian spirit.

A natural consequence of caste societies.

The whole atmosphere is vitiated. Attend an anniversary of one of these conferences, and you will be convinced of the truth of these remarks. The feeling of nationality can hardly thrive in such an atmosphere. The very word *kaum* (nation) has degenerated in meaning and is now loosely applied to a caste; and an *average* member of a caste association has no feeling of "nationality" for any man beyond his own caste.

Their line of reform defective.

This might not have been the original intention of the leaders of caste associations. But that such is the result actually being produced by them is unfortunately undeniable. The defect lies in the *modus operandi*. All the conferences rigorously excluded the question of *caste* from the programme of their reform. But in India a social reform which leaves the caste system untouched is an anomaly, a chimera. And so long as these societies work on these narrow and sectarian lines, they might do more harm than good.

§ 5.—A Suggestion for Caste Conferences: Fusion of Sub-Castes.

Its practicability.

Is it possible to fill up the fatal gap in their programme of social reform, and to make them really useful to the country. It is difficult to answer this question definitely. We shall however suggest a reform which can be carried out by these conferences better than by any other society, *viz.*, the *amalgamation of sub-castes*. Let the conferences try to amalgamate the various branches of the same caste. Each of the four principal castes is sub-divided into numberless petty clans. This is the result of a process of disintegration long going on in the Hindu society. *Let the conferences try to reverse this process.* For example let the *Vaishya*

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Conference try to unite, of course gradually, all the different branches of the Vaishya community.* Let the *Brahmans* do the same. We know that the accomplishment of this is very difficult. But it is not impossible or impracticable as many persons might imagine. If one community has been disunited into many sub-divisions, cannot the many sub-divisions be re-united into one whole? The reform is perfectly feasible. Even the most orthodox of our countrymen can be asked to take this step; for no religious books of the Hindus, not even the latest Puranas or Upa-Puranas recognise these petty divisions and sub-divisions. There is nothing in these books or indeed in any book of Hindu religion to prohibit inter-marriage and social intercourse between Brahmans and Brahmans, or Vaishyas and Vaishyas. Nor is there much difference among the various branches of the same principal caste in point of customs and ceremonies. There will be some opposition in the beginning, but it will soon disappear. What is required is moderation, perseverence, and tact.

We shall hope that the various conferences will give serious attention to this proposal and will take early steps to make a beginning however small. It will be a move in the right direction. It will put their work of reform on a sounder basis, and will perhaps make them a source of unmixed good to the country.

It is satisfactory to note that since the above was first written (in 1900) some of the more liberal Caste Conferences have begun to realize the necessity of this step. For example the *Vaishya Conference* has recommended interdining and intermarriage between the *Vaishnav* and *Jain* branches of Agarwalas, and between the *Kadimi* and *Rajbansi* Agarwalas. In the *Kayasth*

*Vide clause (d) of Resolution I of the 15th session of Vaishya Conference held at Meerut on 12th to 14th February 1908.

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Conference a resolution recommending intermarriage among all branches of the Kayasth community was first brought forward in December, 1905, but it was opposed and postponed. In 1907 it had again to be put off, but a separate society called "the Kayasth Intermarriage Society" was formed. It is a matter for congratulation that at its last sitting in December 1908 the Kayasth Conference at last adopted a Resolution declaring that time had come for introducing intermarriage among the several sub-castes of the Kayasths*

The Kshatriya Sabha or the several conferences of the Brahmans have adopted no such resolution as yet. As a matter of fact even among Brahmans, socially the most orthodox caste, there are several sub-castes, members of which intermarry in some places but do not do so in others. A well informed gentleman of the *Gaur* community informs us that intermarriages between *Gaurs* and *Sarasvats* in Amballa district, between Gaurs and Sanadhyas in Aligarh and Bulandshahar districts, between Sanadhyas and Kanyakubjas in Etawah and Mainpuri districts, are by no means rare even now, but that the leaders of the Gour Conference, though never repudiating them, have not the courage to accept the general principle of intermarriage with these sub-castes. The fact is that, as already observed the process of disintegration is still going on, and these sub-castes are probably of comparatively recent formation. *Gaur*, *Sarasvat*, and *Kanyakubja* all take their names from particular *localities*, and are apparently branches of what was originally one sub-caste, members of which migrated to and settled in the several places which their names signify. It is for the leaders

* Vide proceedings of the Conference in the *Kayasth Somachar*.

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of the communities to put a stop to this process of disruption and in time to reverse it.

It is to be hoped that like the Vaishya and the Kayasth Conferences, other conferences will also move in the matter and have the courage to declare the fusion of sub-castes as the goal of their reform. In view of this it is also necessary that the conferences of the numerically smaller communities, and of the sub-castes of one main caste (*e. g.*, Gaur, Sarasvat, &c., among the Brahmans), should unite to form a single conference representing them all. This will give them that breadth of view and wideness of outlook which is so necessary before any fusion can take place.

But between the adoption of a resolution, and actually carrying it out there is a great gulf which must be bridged if the resolutions are to be of any use. It is yet to be seen if the caste conferences will translate them into action, and show some practical work in this most important direction.

Some objections answered.

Some people of radical views object to the above mentioned reform, and stigmatise it as a halting and half-hearted measure which only aims at reducing the number of hereditary castes to four, or such like number, instead of abolishing them altogether. To this we reply that the perpetuating of four or any number of *hereditary* castes is by no means to be considered as our ideal. But an ideal cannot be reached by one long jump. The caste system is a growth of over two thousand years, and it will take a considerable time to abolish it. The fusion of sub-castes, if accomplished, will certainly pave the road for a fusion of the main castes into one homogenous whole.

There is another reason why intermarriage among only sub-castes of the same caste is, for the present,

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perhaps the only practical way of remedying the evil. All Hindus including Aryas, Brahmos, Sikhs, Jains, are governed by Hindu Law in the matter of succession and inheritance. Though the laws of Manu and other law-givers, even in the form in which they have reached us, allow intermarriage between persons of different classes or *Varnas*, (subject to the rule of hypergamy), yet later legislators have prohibited it. There is no doubt about the prohibition being not ancient. Mr. Mayne says: "The prohibition against marriages between persons of different castes is comparatively modern. Originally marriages between men of one class and women of a lower, even of the Sudra class, were recognised" (*Hindu Law and Usage*, p. 106). Later on speaking of the cause of this change he adds: "Marriages between persons of different classes are long since obsolete. No doubt from the same process of ideas which has split up the whole native community into countless castes which neither eat, drink, nor marry with each other." (*Ibid*, p. 107). Following these later legislators, the High Courts have declared such marriages as illegal. So long as this is the state of the law about marriage, it is useless to talk of intermarriage between persons of different main castes. True, the Civil Marriage Act, (III of 1872), allows such marriages. But it requires that the intending parties to a marriage must declare that they do not profess the Hindu religion. The result is that very few persons have availed themselves of the provisions of that Act; nor are many likely to do so in future. It is also true that our enlightened Government is ever ready to lend its powerful support to the cause of social reform, whenever this is possible without disregarding the religious susceptibilities of the people concerned, and it would not be impossible to induce Legislature to pass

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a law for legalizing such marriages among those who profess the Hindu religion. But pledged to religious neutrality as Government is, it is not likely to take up the matter until the public opinion is ripe for the change. It is unfortunate that Mr. Patels' bill could not be passed into law. Such intermarriages are therefore beyond the pale of practical reform for the present. As regards intermarriages between sub-castes of the same caste, they are allowed by the same text-writers of later periods who prohibit marriages between persons of different main castes. As a result of this, the High Courts have generally upheld the validity of such intermarriages, even though they are contrary to the present custom.

§ 6.—A JUST ATTITUDE TOWARDS CASTE.

Another way of meeting the evil is a just and proper attitude towards caste. Let us discountenance the system as much as possible in *practice*, if we condemn it in *theory*. Let us show practically in our behaviour towards our fellowmen that we are prepared to respect virtue and goodness wherever they may be found. Let us not show undue respect to a man who is born in a high-caste but whose character is otherwise despicable; nor show slight or contempt to a man simply because he belongs to a low-caste. This will have the effect of humbling the proud Brahman who has caused to deserve the title, and elevating the Shudra in his own estimation and inspiring him with a manly self-respect. Above all let us use no odious caste names. Nor should we despise any profession simply because it happens to be in the hands of the Shudras. Let us remember that all professions are honourable if honestly and diligently pursued, that it is the heart, and not the calling which degrades a man. This will, besides slackening caste prejudices, raise many a neglected and so-called low occupation in the public

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estimation and thus act as a most healthy stimulus to the fallen industry of India. When the Shudra will see that he is not necessarily doomed to be a contemptible person all his life, nor his profession to be a despicable thing, he will certainly try to deserve the privilege, and to become an honourable as well as useful member of society. This will be an accession of incalculable strength to the Hindu nationality. The Brahman when he sees that his mere birth secures him no respect, will try to deserve those privileges which he covets and which he has long enjoyed. This will also be an inestimable boon to the Hindu society.

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CONCLUSION.

We have shown that the caste system is not sanctioned by our ancient scriptures and that it has already done infinite harm to the Hindus. We have also suggested some practical ways of meeting the evil. May we now ask our countrymen to try their best to root out this evil?

Difficulties of the task.

The task is by no means an easy one. More than 2000 years ago the great Buddha denounced the iniquitous distinction of castes in the strongest manner. His religion spread from one end of the country to another, and flourished for about ten centuries. It might seem that caste had received its death-blow at the hands of Buddha. But this was not to be! Buddhism declined, and at last disappeared altogether from the land. The caste system however not only survived it, but received a fresh development with the revival of Hinduism, till it succeeded in completely wrecking the nationality of the Hindus by splitting them into countless petty sub-divisions. Twenty five centuries later the great Swami Dayananda had to contend against the same foe. Between these two ever-memorable personages, there has been a series of other reformers who preached the equality of all men in the eye of religion. Ramananda, Kabir, Chaitanya, Dadu, Nanak, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, whose names will always be cherished as the greatest benefactors of humanity, were all champions of the low-born Shudras. But in spite of the efforts of these great men the caste system still maintains its grip on the Hindu mind. Few have the

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courage to break its adamantine chains. Nay it has given its impress even to the other originally non-sectarian systems, with which it came into contact. There are very few *Buddhists* in India; but the *Jains*, whose religion is much the same, have in course of time come to recognise and observe caste to a great extent. The *Sikhs* fall under the same predicament. Even the *Mohammedans* and *Christians* of India have hardly escaped the contagion. Thus will the reader form some idea of the enormous difficulty which the Indian reformer has to surmount in uprooting this evil. Sir Herbert Risley from whose book we have quoted frequently goes so far as to assert that "so long as Hinduism shows no decline from its present strength caste will preserve its ancient reign, and nothing short of a great accession of strength to either Islam or Christianity can materially modify the social and religious future of India" (*The people of India*, p. 236). Is then the fate of India sealed, and is there no hope for the abolition of caste, unless Hinduism itself is stamped out or at least declines? This is certainly true if by Hinduism is meant the degenerate system of religion and sociology which at present prevails in this country. But it is not true if the term Hinduism is also intended to include the religion of the Vedas and Upanishads which recognises no hereditary castes, which preaches the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of mankind, which enjoins equal love for all men, and allows equal opportunities to all, and under the influence of which the ancient Aryas became the pioneers of civilization, and the founders of a number of sciences, arts, and industries, which the world values so much. There is no occasion for despair. Let us never forget the words of the Rishi:

But no occasion for despair.

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतम्

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"Truth alone conquers, falsehood never." Let us then be up and doing. Let us try our best to uproot this evil from amongst us. It is a slur on our humanity, a blot on our religion, a disgrace to our nationality, and a retrogression from our past civilisation. Let us work in right earnest to root it out, and God will certainly crown our efforts with success.

An appeal.

ओं शम्॥

FINIS.

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Om

PRINCIPLES OF THE ARYA SAMAJ.

1. God is the primary cause of all true knowledge, and of everything known by its means.
2. God is All-truth, All-knowledge, All-beautitude, Incorporeal, Almighty, Just, Merciful, Unbegotten, Infinite, Unchangeable, without a beginning, Incomparable, the Support and the Lord of all, All-pervading, Omniscient, Imperishable, Immortal, exempt from fear, Eternal, Holy, and the Cause of the universe. *To Him alone worship is due.*
3. The Vedas are the Books of true knowledge, and it is the paramount duty of every Arya to read or hear them read, to teach and preach them to others.
4. An Arya should always be ready to accept truth and renounce untruth when discovered.
5. All actions ought to be done conformably to virtue, *i. e.*, after a thorough consideration of right and wrong.
6. The primary object of the Samaj is to do good to the world by improving the physical, spiritual and social condition of mankind.
7. All ought to be treated with love, justice and due regard to their merits.
8. Ignorance ought to be dispelled and knowledge diffused.
9. No one ought to be contented with his own good alone; but every one ought to regard his prosperity as included in that of others.
10. In matters which affect the general social well-being of our race he ought to discard all differences and not allow his individuality to interfere; but in strictly personal matters every one may act with freedom.

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